



The Informed Consumer

Consumer Affairs Branch e-newsletter
Fairfax County Department of Cable and Consumer Services

Winter 2012

Volume 4, Number 1

Inside This Issue:

National Consumer Protection Week	1
NCPW Schedule of Events	2
FTC: New Rules for Robocalls	3
CPRD Community Outreach Opportunities	3
2012 Virginia Legislative Session	4
Fair Housing Outreach Program	4
WMCCAI Expo	4
Your Community, Your Call	
Congratulations to Michelle Thompson!	4

Visit Consumer Central for all of your online consumer needs:

- File a Complaint Online
- Tenant-Landlord Handbook
- Consumer Protection Commission (CPC)
- Tenant-Landlord Commission (TLC)
- Property Owners' and Condominium Association Resources
- Consumer Focus
- Your Community, Your Call

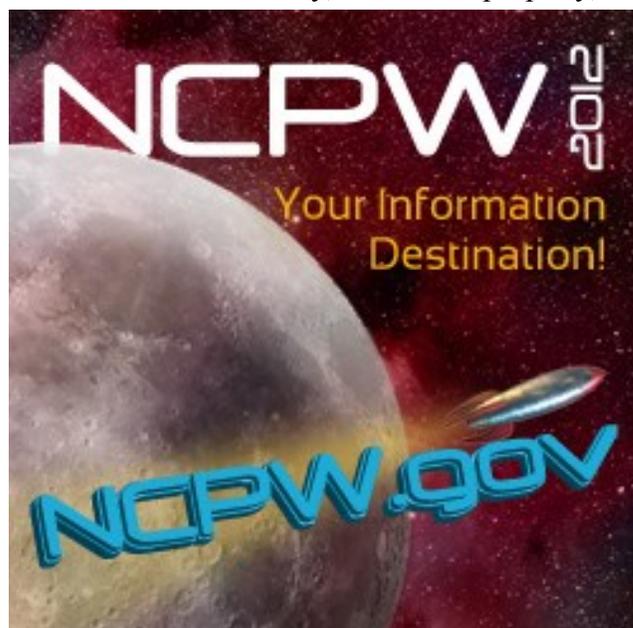
National Consumer Protection Week 2012

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs Gears Up for 14th Annual National Consumer Protection Week

Fairfax County Consumer Affairs is joining with federal, state, and local government agencies and national organizations to celebrate the 14th annual National Consumer Protection Week (NCPW) coming March 4-10, 2012. During NCPW, groups nationwide share tips and information that help consumers protect their privacy, manage money and debt, avoid identity theft, and avoid frauds and scams.

This year, Consumer Affairs will focus on financial literacy, unclaimed property, and homeowners and community associations. Here in Fairfax, we will be hosting many events around the county. Please refer to the calendar of events for details.

Go to www.ncpw.gov to read, view, download and order multiple copies of educational materials provided by our NCPW partners, check out a calendar of events nationwide, and find out how you can host an event. The website's blog features posts from consumer experts nationwide, and allows consumers to connect directly with them about a variety of consumer protection resources.



2012 National Consumer Protection Week Partners

Virginia Department of Treasury, Unclaimed Property Division

Office of the Attorney General of Virginia

Certified Financial Planners Board of Standards

A Great Meeting

See page 2 for full schedule of events.

National Consumer Protection Week 2012

Schedule of Events



Financial Planning Today for Tomorrow

Wednesday, March 7, 2012, from 1-3 p.m. Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Conference Rooms 9/10.

Planning for the future starts with managing your money. Although you may have a financial plan in place, how do you know if your plan will help you achieve your financial goals? The financial planning process requires homework. To get you started, join Consumer Affairs for a workshop featuring certified financial planners from the Certified Financial Planner Board of Standards, Inc. (CFPB). The first fifteen consumers to register will receive a free 20 minute confidential session with a Certified Financial Planner courtesy of the CFPB.

Lead a Great Meeting!

Basic Tools for Volunteer Leaders of Homeowners and Condominium Associations

Thursday, March 8, 2012, from 12 noon - 1:30 p.m. Fairfax County Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Conference Rooms 9/10.

When is the last time you heard someone say “I just came from a great meeting!” There is no magic gavel - anyone can learn how to lead a great meeting. Volunteer leaders of homeowners and condominium associations are invited to join Consumer Affairs for a workshop on how to chair a great meeting. Colette Collier Trohan, Certified Professional Parliamentarian and President of A Great Meeting, Inc will share the basic tools that every successful meeting chair needs.

Unclaimed Property Search - Virginia Department of Treasury

Monday, March 5, 10 - 3 p.m., North Atrium, Fairfax County Government Center, Fairfax, VA

Tuesday, March 6, 10 - 3 p.m., South County Center, 8350 Richmond Highway, Alexandria, VA

The Virginia Department of the Treasury's Unclaimed Property Division may be holding your uncashed paychecks, lost stocks, bonds, dividends, utility deposits, insurance claims and more. Stop by to meet with representatives from the VA Department of Treasury to see if any money is owed to you. Last year, over \$30,000 was returned to consumers during NCPW!

Consumer Affairs Information Exhibit

March 5 - 9, 11:30 - 1:30 p.m., North Atrium, Fairfax County Government Center

To register for an event, or to request reasonable ADA accommodations, please email consumer@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-222-8435 TTY 711.

Need Advice?**Ask an Investigator**

Investigators are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. for walk-in assistance and advice. Call for Advice: 703-222-8435 TTY: 711 or submit a question via e-mail on our Website.

File A Complaint

When you call for advice, you may be asked by an Investigator to file a written complaint so that Consumer Affairs may assist you in resolving your dispute. You may file a complaint online or request that a complaint form be mailed to you.

Search Complaint History

Research the complaint history of a company prior to completing a transaction.

Visit Us in South County

An investigator is available each Wednesday for advice at Access Fairfax in the South County Government Center.

8350 Richmond Highway,
Suite 125
Alexandria, VA 22309

In the Spotlight:

Your Community, Your Call

Consumer Affairs Branch

12000 Government Center
Parkway, Suite 433
Fairfax, VA 22035

Phone: 703-222-8435 TTY: 711
Fax: 703-324-3900

Visit Our Website

New Rules for Robocalls

Businesses now need your written permission before they can call you with prerecorded telemarketing messages — also known as robocalls — regardless of whether you already have a relationship with the business. If a business wants to call you to deliver prerecorded messages, it must tell you clearly that it is asking for your written permission to call you with these kinds of messages. You may refuse, or you may give your permission by signing a paper, responding to an email, pressing a keypad prompt during a live call with a sales agent or clicking a button on a website to show that you will allow these messages from a business. A business can't require you to agree to these calls in order to get goods or services. If you decide that you will accept prerecorded messages, you get to choose the number to which these calls are placed.

If you have agreed to allow prerecorded telemarketing messages, you may also change your mind and ask that they stop. Businesses using prerecorded messages must tell you at the beginning of the message how you can stop future calls; and they must provide an automated opt-out that you can activate by voice or keypress throughout the call. If the message could be left on your voicemail or answering machine, businesses also must provide a toll-free number at the beginning of the message that will connect to an automated opt-out system that you can call to opt out any time.

If you chose to opt out while receiving a prerecorded message, the call should be disconnected immediately, and you should not receive any more calls from the business that sponsored the prerecorded call. If you call a toll-free number to opt out, the business should allow you to opt out by pressing a button on your telephone keypad or asking to opt out — without being required to speak to a sales agent. The business that sponsored the calls must honor your request immediately and prevent future telemarketing calls to your telephone number. For more information, please visit ftc.gov.

Interested in Learning about Cable? Outreach Opportunities

The Department of Cable and Consumer Services, Communications Policy and Regulation Division (CPRD), conducts a variety of outreach presentations about television, telephone and cable topics, including how to manage cable company construction and service concerns, choosing the service that meets your needs, tips for purchasing digital televisions, and cable regulation and policy issues.

Sample topics of interest:

- Who's Digging in My Yard?
- Tips For Buying a New TV
- Getting the Best from Your Cable Company
- Connecting Your Home
- Digital TV
- Cable Companies and Private Property Easements
- What You Can Do to Expedite Cable Availability
- Cable Regulation and Policy Issues

Please call CPRD at 703-324-5902 to discuss and arrange for this public service. Reasonable ADA accommodations available.

2012 Virginia Legislative Session

The 2012 Regular Session of the Virginia General Assembly convenes on Wednesday, January 11, 2012. Citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia can take an active role in the legislative process. The Virginia General Assembly website offers online resources to help the public become more engaged. The Legislative Information System allows tracking and review of legislation and committee agendas prior to meetings. To receive free email notifications about specific bills, sign up for the free Lobbyist-in-a-Box service, and track up to five bills without charge. Search for proposed bills specifically related to common interest communities, the Property Owners' Association Act, or the Condominium Act. Volunteer leaders are encouraged to stay informed and engaged.

Fairfax County's Fair Housing Outreach Program

The Fairfax County Office of Human Rights and Equity Programs Human Rights Division provides speakers to any business, organization, homeowners or condominium association located in Fairfax County or that provides housing and related services in the County. These services are free of charge. Presentations are tailored to meet the needs of the individual audience and might include, who is covered under fair housing laws, actions prohibited and why, what liabilities there might be for violating the law, and how to conduct business and manage properties in a non-discriminatory manner.

If you would like to have a representative from the Human Rights Division come to your community to present an educational seminar about how to comply with Fair Housing laws, please contact Margaret Squires, Fair Housing Coordinator at 703-324-2953 or by email at margaret.squires@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Your Community, Your Call

View the most recent *Your Community, Your Call, Meetings and Minutes* on Mondays at 8 p.m. on Fairfax County Government Channel 16 or on Video on Demand. Kenneth Chadwick, attorney with Chadwick, Washington, Moriarty, Elmore & Bunn, P.C. and Nicholas Mazzarella, Executive Vice President of Community Management Corporation joined Michelle Thompson Consumer Affairs to discuss best practices for conducting effective meetings and drafting minutes. The next live edition of *Your Community, Your Call* will be on Tuesday, January 31, 2012 at 7 p.m.

Congratulations!

Michelle Thompson, Fairfax County's Homeowners and Condominium Association Liaison, was named the Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute (WMCCAI) Virginia Public Advocate of the Year. Michelle serves as a member of the WMCCAI Virginia Legislative Committee to stay abreast of current legislation that may impact Fairfax County common interest communities.

WMCCAI Conference and Expo—March 31, 2012

Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute (WMCCAI) invites you to attend the largest community association industry event in the Washington metro area **March 31, 2012**, at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center, 801 Mount Vernon Place NW, Washington, D.C.

The 2012 WMCCAI Conference & Expo will feature 15 educational sessions on pertinent topics that affect those who live in and work with community associations. Approximately 190 companies and organizations will be on the exhibit hall floor showcasing goods and services of interest to community associations. Register Today!