

The Tip Sheet



**April
2017**

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Contact Information:

Director

Elaine Windberg
Phone: 512-463-1914

Associate Director

Liana Curtis
Phone: 512-463-1979

Program Coordinator

Douglas Brodie
Phone: 512-463-1964

Program Coordinator

Le'Darrion Allen
Phone: 512-465-4832

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711

Phone:

512-463-1919

Fax:

512-475-2440

Email:

Txcrimestoppers@gov.texas.gov

Website:

www.thetexascrimestoppers.org

Message from the Chairman

Supplement Rewards; windfall or avoidable headache?

The communities we serve are eager to support Crime Stoppers (CS) and law enforcement, and it's not uncommon for well-meaning citizens to offer to fund rewards when "major" crimes occur. When this happens—preferably before this happens—the board of the CS organization must decide whether to accept supplemental reward funds, or not.

Let me say at the outset that I do not recommend accepting supplemental rewards; donations are great but supplemental rewards are complicated. I know I've just lost a few readers who see any offer to fund a reward as a windfall that cannot be passed up. They might think their organization is different or that they couldn't operate without supplemental reward funds. Because of those people, you need to be well versed on the topic and able to guide your organizations in an informed discussion.

Let's get on the same page regarding the term "supplemental reward". A supplemental reward (SR) is a reward that 1.) is funded by an entity outside of the CS organization, and 2.) is in an amount greater than would be offered by the CS organization on its own. The funding entity could be anyone, including a business, a victim, or a law enforcement agency, and the SR could be in any amount greater than the CS organization's standard reward schedule. A donation to CS to cover a reward based upon the organization's standard reward schedule is not an SR. Take any such donations you can get but make it clear, preferably in writing, how CS will use the funds. Now, on to the concerns.



Without an ironclad written agreement between the outside entity and CS, CS will end up on the wrong end of the stick. Most entities interested in offering an SR are acting out of anger or frustration; the vast majority of SR offers are knee-jerk reactions by people without the proper mindset to follow CS rules or to hold out for the one anonymous tip that might solve the case. CS programs tell stories of: people who "investigated" the crime themselves, decided the reward wasn't needed, and demanded the SR funds be returned, leaving CS to pay the reward or deal with the negative publicity; not receiving the funds upfront and being left holding the bag when the person couldn't or wouldn't pay the promised amount; people who "publicize" their SR and entice tipsters to contact them directly, pay the reward directly, and send the media a photo of the "tipster" receiving a reward check—those somehow get reported as "Crime Stoppers identifies 'anonymous' tipster"; and reward funds being returned to the entity after the agreed upon time period and tipsters still expecting the larger reward, leaving CS to pay the reward or deal with the negative publicity.

When a community experiences a major crime, be it murder, kidnapping, robbery, or hit-and-run ("major" is a relative term), residents, law enforcement, and CS want it quickly solved and offering a larger-than-usual reward seems like a way to make that happen. In truth, there doesn't seem to be a direct correlation between higher rewards and the time it takes to receive a case-solving tip. Even if there were a connection, the repeatable negative effects of SRs outweigh the potential benefit. Let's say a CS organization accepts an SR that will double the standard reward amount for a robbery; how will it look to the public when the next unsolved robbery sees only the standard reward offer of "up to \$1,000"? Will Facebook and Twitter wait for the organization's explanation or will social media ignite with claims that the discrepancy is based on the race, gender, religion, or social status of the victims? Similar outrage will be directed at a CS organization that offers a large SR for an unsolved crime that later turns out to not be a crime, such as a bogus report of a burglary, robbery, or sexual assault. Someone could complain about a standard reward offer in such a case but we turn that around by extending the reward offer to an anonymous tip that helped prove the false report; the SR funder, however, might not agree to their money being used that way.

There are many other issues to consider but, in my opinion, none make the case for SRs. By consistently offering the same "up to" reward, no matter what the crime or who is the victim, we eliminate the appearance of bias and make it easier to follow our established rules.

Each CS organization must make its own determination regarding supplemental rewards. Whatever the decision, make it before an SR offer is on the table and after considering all the facts. Don't make the decision in reaction to public opinion or pressure. Since there inevitably are some programs that will be involved with SRs, I have a generic supplemental reward agreement that attempts to mitigate some of the donor-related problems; contact me if you need it but be forewarned that I might try to talk you out of accepting the SR.

JB Smith
Chairman, Texas Crime Stoppers Council

Announcements

2017 Council Meetings:

May 4, 2017 at 12:00 PM
Fredericksburg, TX
Inn on Baron's Creek
308 S. Washington St.

June 5, 2017 at 6:00 PM
Brownsville, TX
Ringgold Civic Pavilion
501 E. Ringgold St. Suite 5

Social Media: Follow us on Facebook! <https://www.facebook.com/TheTexasCrimeStoppers/>

16-Hour Crime Stoppers Basic Training Course: We are excited to announce that we will offer 16hr. Basic Crime Stoppers Training through July 2017! Register at www.thetexascrimestoppers.org/training

- April 10-11, Grand Prairie (Registration closed)
- May 4-5, Fredericksburg (Class Full; Registration Closed)
Training in conjunction with Texas Crime Stoppers Council Meeting
- June 5-6, Brownsville (Registration Open)
Training in conjunction with Texas Crime Stoppers Council Meeting
- July 10-11, Galveston (Registration Open)

Congratulations to our Texas Crime Stoppers Organizations celebrating anniversaries in April!



- 11th Anniversary – Coastal Bend Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 15th Anniversary – La Joya ISD Campus Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 15th Anniversary – Wheeler County Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 16th Anniversary – Killeen ISD Crime Stoppers
- 25th Anniversary – Kimble County Crimestoppers
- 31st Anniversary – Austin County Crime Stoppers
- 31st Anniversary – New Braunfels Comal County Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 32nd Anniversary – Hood County Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 32nd Anniversary – Kerr Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 33rd Anniversary – Crime Stoppers of Brenham-Washington County, Inc.
- 35th Anniversary – McAllen Crime Stoppers, Inc.
- 36th Anniversary – Kingsville Crime Stoppers, Inc.

Associate Director's Message

It's 2017 and we live in an age where the success of any company depends on its ability to establish a significant online presence. Did you know that there are approximately 1 billion websites on the World Wide Web? In a culture where online traffic can determine an organizations efficiency and effectiveness, I want to take a moment to share with you why it is important that every Texas Crime Stoppers organization has a website.

First, let's talk about connectivity. A website will help your local crime stoppers organization connect with your potential tipsters, donors and community partners. Our tipsters are no longer consulting the yellow pages to find out where they can submit information. Today, an online search is the instinctual tool for finding what you are looking for. Therein lies a gap in connectivity and a website is the necessary remedy. If a tipster conducts an online search you want to be one of, if not the first, website to populate.

Having a website is the first step. The most important responsibility is keeping it up to date. Even a basic website is effective as long as it is current! This platform is a way for you to connect with a vast audience and is an outlet for sharing who you are, what you do, who you service, and how your website visitors can get involved. Whether involved means submitting a tip, making a donation or working with you at a local level to support your organization, this website is a central location where these entities can gather information about your organization and interact with you. In addition, by having a web presence you are diversifying your outreach strategy and connecting with a greater number of potential tipsters.

Now let's discuss credibility. Having a website legitimizes your Crime Stoppers Organization. But this is only true if you are keeping your website current. What will motivate your site visitors is relevant information which reassures their confidence in your ability to solve crimes and bring safety to the community. The ability to see the impact your organization has in your community will offer incentive in many ways. This will demonstrate to tipsters that tips received help to capture wanted criminals, donors will see that investing in your organization positively impacts the community you serve, and community partners will be eager to assist your cause and get involved in your successes!

Note: Having a website with out of date information does more harm than good. This can actually work against your organization. First impressions are everything and that means online too. If your website has obsolete and out of date information it diminishes your credibility and your audience will question whether the organization is still active.

A common misconception is that your local crime stoppers organization would not benefit from a website or that it's more work than it's worth. I understand that taking on the creation of a website and maintaining it can be a daunting task. However, no matter how large or small your organization you can unquestionably benefit from having an online presence. In more rural areas there may not be a media outlet accessible to you. A weekly newspaper is a great tool to feature crimes and publicize your tip line. But once that newspaper hits the recycle bin the access is lost. As previously mentioned, this is where your website comes in to fill the gap. Your tip line becomes accessible 24/7, your featured felons can be viewed at any time of the day or night, and your crime of the week is not only in your local Sunday paper but now easily reached, by anyone in any county or state, every day of the week. And your news-worthy success stories can be published to show the impact you have in your communities. I strongly encourage each board to designate a "website specialist". This board member should be responsible for weekly updates on your organizations website and as a result keeping you connected to your target audience!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions at txcrimestoppers@gov.texas.gov.

Happy April!



Liana Curtis, Associate Director

Texas Crime Stoppers, Office of the Governor



Texas Most Wanted

REWARD OFFERED 10 MOST WANTED FUGITIVE FROM MONTGOMERY COUNTY AREA



**UP TO
\$8,500 REWARD**

AUSTIN – The reward for Johnny June Mason, Jr., 48, a Texas 10 Most Wanted Sex Offender and this month's featured fugitive, has been increased to \$8,000 for information leading to his capture if the tip comes in during the month of April. Mason is wanted for failure to register as a sex offender and parole violation. **All tips are guaranteed to be anonymous.**

Mason has ties to Houston (his last known address) and Louisiana, including the Baton Rouge and New Orleans areas. In 1990, Mason was convicted in Louisiana of aggravated rape and aggravated crime against nature involving a 16-year-old girl. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison. Mason has a history of violating his parole and failing to comply with sex offender registration requirements, and he has been wanted since June 2016. For more information or updates in the event of his arrest, see his wanted bulletin at: <http://www.dps.texas.gov/Texas10MostWanted/SexOffenderDetails.aspx?id=349>.

Mason is 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighs approximately 150 pounds. He has a tattoo of Chinese characters on his left forearm and a scar on his forehead."

To be eligible for the cash rewards, tipsters must provide information to authorities using one of the five following methods:

- Call the Crime Stoppers hotline at 1-800-252-TIPS (8477).
- Text the letters "DPS" – followed by your tip – to 274637 (CRIMES) from your cell phone.
- Submit a web tip through the DPS website by selecting the fugitive you have information about, and then clicking on the link under their picture.
- Submit a Facebook tip at <http://www.facebook.com/texas10mostwanted> by clicking the "SUBMIT A TIP" link (under the "About" section).
- Submit a tip through the DPS Mobile App. The app is currently available for iPhone users on the Apple App Store: (<https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/texas-dps/id902092368?mt=8>) and for Android users on Google Play: (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.microassist.texasdps&hl=en>).

All tips are anonymous – regardless of how they are submitted, and tipsters will be provided a tip number instead of using a name.

DPS investigators work with local law enforcement agencies to select fugitives for the Texas 10 Most Wanted Fugitive and Sex Offender lists. You can find the current lists – with photos – on the DPS website at <http://www.dps.texas.gov/texas10mostwanted/>.

Do not attempt to apprehend these fugitives; they are considered armed and dangerous.