

Date March 29, 2019

Attorney General Mark L. Warner, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, March 29, 2019



This week, we celebrated Senior Day at the Florida Capitol. More than five million seniors call Florida home. Some are lifelong Floridians. Others moved here to retire and enjoy our warm weather, great economy and beautiful beaches.

Seniors also play an important role in our efforts to fight fraud aimed at older Floridians. In recognition of the day, I invited members of our Seniors v. Crime Program to our office to thank them for the work they do to protect Floridians.

These volunteers, called Senior Sleuths, helped recover more than a million dollars last year. They recovered an additional value of \$986,327 through realized gains, such as a contractor returning to finish promised work or credits applied to a future purchase.

Protecting Florida's seniors is a top priority of our office, and these Senior Sleuths volunteer their time to help fight fraud and protect older Floridians from scams. They are also now playing an important role on [Florida's new Senior Protection Team](#).

The team is comprised of leading members from our Office of Statewide Prosecution, Consumer Protection Division and Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. Seniors v. Crime and the Florida Department of Law Enforcement are actively assisting the team with investigations and outreach efforts.

The goal is to bring attorneys and investigators specialized in fighting civil, criminal and health care fraud together to develop strategies to protect Floridians 60 and older.

For more information about our Senior Protection Team, click [here](#). To report senior fraud, call 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or visit [MyFloridaLegal.com](#).



In The News

Florida Attorney General wants Brandon 'diploma mill' to shut down, WTVT

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Florida AG Wants To Shut Down High School With No Faculty, Classes That Was Handing Out Diplomas, Newsweek

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Ashley Moody talks trafficking, opioids at Florida Association of Counties event, Florida Politics

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Attorney General Issues Consumer Alert For Tax, Identity Scams, NorthEscambia.com

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Florida AG Ashley Moody Wants to Crack Down on Robocalls, Spectrum Bay News 9

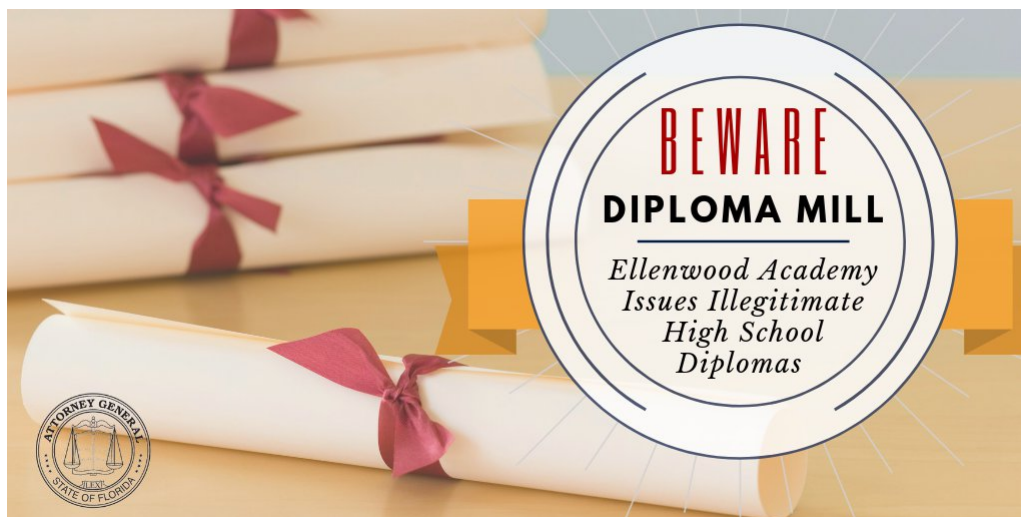
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Ninja Robbers Sentenced to 45 Years in Prison by 20th Judicial Circuit Judge, Space Coast Daily

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Protecting Floridians

Attorney General Moody Asks Court to Shut Down Diploma Mill



Attorney General Ashley Moody filed a court action in Hillsborough County to shut down a Florida diploma mill. The action stems from complaints against Ellenwood Academy, LLC for deceptive marketing of illegitimate high school diplomas to consumers in Florida and nationwide. The organization allegedly charges consumers \$195 to enroll in a high school program and take an exam but does not employ any faculty or provide any instruction for consumers. Ellenwood diplomas are not accepted for admission to any school in Florida's State University System.

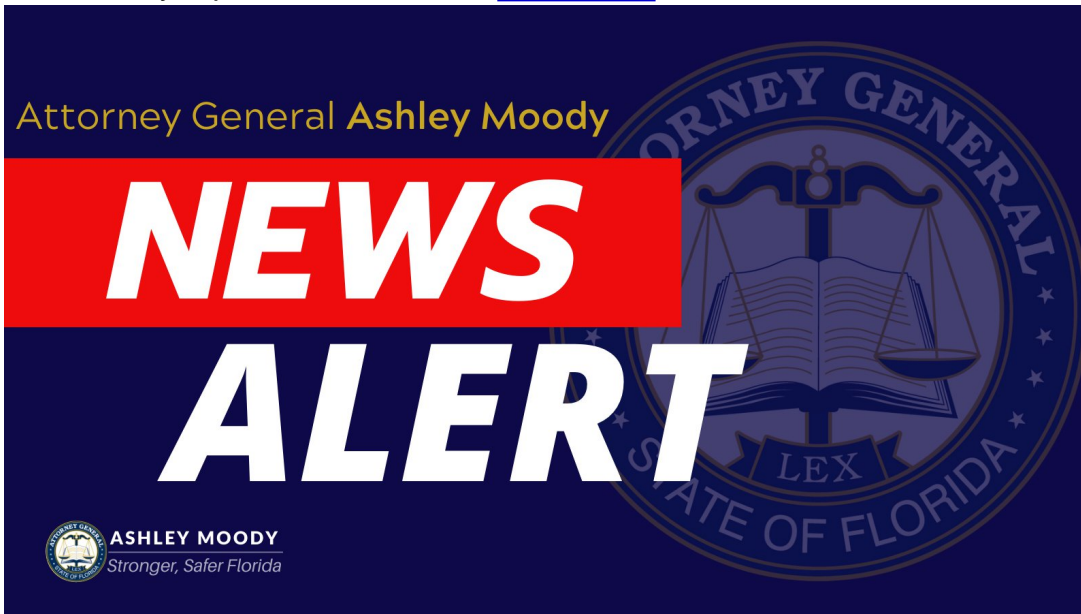
Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "There are no shortcuts to success, yet diploma mills continue to falsely market easy alternatives to the hard work it takes to earn an education. Students often enroll with the goal of obtaining a diploma to advance their careers, but often leave with a worthless piece of paper. Anyone who encounters a diploma mill should report it to my office by calling 1(866) 9NO-SCAM or by visiting MyFloridaLegal.com." [Read More](#)

CONSUMER ALERT: Tips to Avoid Tax Scams and Identity Theft as Filing Deadline Approaches



Attorney General Ashley Moody is issuing a Consumer Alert ahead of the federal tax filing deadline to help Floridians avoid common tax scams. From now through the April 15 filing deadline, identity thieves and scammers will be ramping up efforts to steal taxpayers returns and sensitive identification information.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Tax season is a busy time for identity thieves and scammers as they look for ways to steal returns and the identities of taxpayers. When filing, Floridians should take precautions to protect their identities and sensitive tax-filing information to avoid falling victim to these fraudsters, and if anyone encounters a scam they should immediately report it to our office." [Read More](#)



A Florida judge

ordered lengthy prison sentences for two men who dressed like ninjas and broke into homes across the state. The often-called ninja robbers

Attorney General Ashley Moody

NEWS ALERT



Henry Contreras

and Johnathan Contreras, pleaded guilty to charges related to a string of robberies involving millions of dollars of stolen property. The Honorable Joseph Foster of Florida's 20th Judicial Circuit sentenced each man to 45 years in prison.

According to charging documents filed by the Florida Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution, the men were part of a larger group that broke into homes at night wearing dark clothing and masks. Their method of operation included tying up home owners and leading them through the homes at gunpoint to locate cash, jewelry and other expensive items

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "The terror inflicted by this crime spree frightened home owners, as the surveillance video from these burglaries made news across the country. The brazen nature of these criminal acts—breaking into homes and holding people hostage—highlights the danger the defendants pose, and I am grateful our statewide prosecutors secured long prison sentences to help ensure these men will never again terrorize Floridians." [Read More](#)

Attorney General Moody Continues to Combat Fraudulent Veterans Charities



Attorney General Ashley Moody, along with the Federal Trade Commission, took action in federal court against a Sarasota-based veterans charity. American Veterans Foundation, Inc. and its founder, Paul Monville signed an order agreeing to a permanent ban against soliciting charitable donations or participating in oversight and management of charities in the future. According to the complaint, filed at the same time as the settlement agreement, AVF raised approximately \$6.5 million dollars between 2014 and 2017 from donors nationwide based on misleading promises that donations would assist veterans.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "This fraudulent charity took in millions of dollars from generous donors who believed the funds would go to active military members and veterans. Deceiving donors by exploiting the brave men and women who protect our country is disgraceful. My office will ensure that any recovered money from this sham charity will go to legitimate charities that help our amazing military members." [Read More](#)



Attorney General

Ashley Moody's Office of Statewide Prosecution secured a 20-year prison sentence for a

Deltona man trafficking heroin. Henry Guilfo Bermudez, 44, pleaded guilty to distributing heroin throughout western Volusia County. Charges include conspiracy to traffic in heroin, trafficking in heroin and two other related felony counts. The Honorable James R. Clayton, Circuit Judge for the Seventh Judicial Circuit of Florida, added five years of supervised probation to begin once the defendant is released from prison.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "Heroin is a deadly drug helping fuel the opioid crisis claiming 17 lives a day in Florida. We must do everything in our power to stop the trafficking of heroin and other dangerous opioids into our state. I hope this long prison sentence sends a clear message to anyone trying to sell drugs in Florida, that they will be caught and will spend a long time behind bars." [Read More](#)

Events

This week, Attorney General Ashley Moody spoke to mayors from across the state of Florida about the impact of the opioid crisis in local communities and how the Attorney General's Office is combating the crisis.



Attorney General Moody meeting with University of South Florida students involved in the



Attorney General Moody addressing members of Leadership St. Petersburg in the Senate Chamber of Florida's Historic Capitol. Leadership St. Petersburg is a division of the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and is one of the oldest programs in America.



Attorney General Moody speaking to the First Coast Manufacturers Association at the Florida



Attorney General Moody meeting with Leadership Bay members in Tallahassee to discuss Hurricane Michael recovery efforts. Leadership Bay is a community leadership development program presented by the Bay County Chamber of Commerce.

