

CUB COOKERY



Cubmaster Brenda Bassinger supervises 4th Georgetown Cubs as they prepare dinner for a gathering of Cubs from Halton Hills and Bronte at Woodland Trails Camp last week. Craft instruction, tent-erecting and a flashlight hike were among the weekend's activities. (Photo by Jean Layman)

Businesses conned by 'Guida Italiana'

Invoice fraud exposed

Herald Special
The Better Business Bureau of Metropolitan Toronto has uncovered a "look-alike invoice" scheme which is milking thousands of dollars from Southern Ontario businesses.

According to BBB President Paul Tuz, the results of the investigation have been passed on to Metro Toronto Police and federal Postal officials, and it is hoped that action will be taken as a result of their follow-up investigations.

The operation is being run by a company calling itself Guida Italiana Company.

It sends out "look-alike invoices" to the accounts payable departments of businesses, without legally stipulated disclaimers clearly denoting the fact that they are solicitations for advertising, not bills.

Mr. Tuz says businessmen across Southern Ontario should beware of the scheme which was exposed as a result of Bureau members' complaints on receiving what they at first thought were bills

for their advertising promotions.

The ads were supposedly bought in the "Italian Commercial Directory" at rates varying from about \$34 to \$196.

Says Mr. Tuz: "Both Italian companies and companies which seem to be dealing with Italian people, or firms, are receiving the 'invoice' from Guida Italiana. It seems to be in contravention of the Post Office Act, because the 'invoice' does not have the stipulation that it's a solicitation and doesn't have to be paid."

He said the "invoices" uses the word "contract" and that the BBB has received numerous complaints from people who say they have never asked for advertising from this firm and who feel that this type of solicitation is misleading.

"This is one of the most amateurish of such schemes that we've come across", says Mr. Tuz. The more professional invoice purveyors may use the legal disclaimer, required by the Canada Postal Guide which sets out specified type size, layout and color. A disclaimer would read:

"This is a solicitation for the order of (goods, services or goods and services, as the case may be) and not a bill, invoice or statement of account due. You are under no obligation to make any payments on account of this offer unless you accept this offer."

"This is an old scheme, with a new twist, not a new one," says Mr. Tuz. Variations of this scheme have been used for the last several years to milk millions of dollars from businesses - small, medium and large. The BBB has already warned businesses of these scams and it would pay businesses to pass along the word to their accounts payable departments to watch out for them. All too often such departments just send out the cheques to cover these "invoices" taking it for granted that the company is paying for its advertising promotions.

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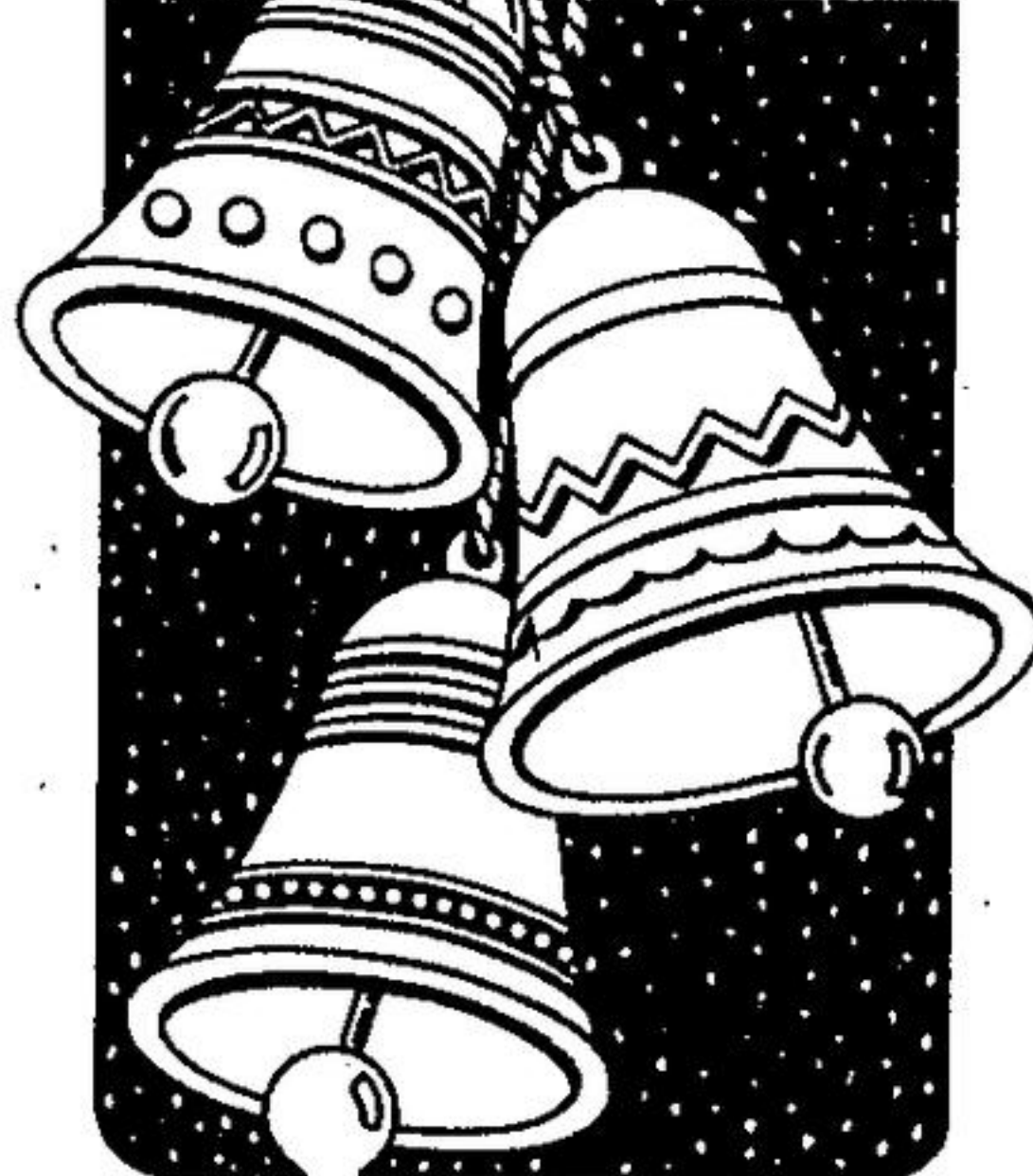
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