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Eaton economic crime unit recovers nearly $400,000

By Kelly Hassett
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DELTA TWP. - Eaton County's Economic Crime Unit has helped local businesses get nearly $400,000 back from bad checks and retail fraud in two years.

County Prosecutor Jeffrey Sauter released second-year results from the grant-funded program Thursday.

"I think we have actually made a difference," he said.

The group focuses on economic crime, consumer protection, bad check and retail fraud offenders, and has investigated individuals for embezzlement, forgery and other felonies.

Angela Sanborn's business got $30,000 more back from bad checks since going to the crime unit for help.

"We were getting about 50 percent with ourselves and our collection agency," said Sanborn, business manager for Millennium Digital Media's Charlotte office.

"With this program, we have seen a recovery rate of over 80 percent with our (nonsufficient funds) checks."

By the numbers

$395,208.82: returned to merchants through Eaton County Economic Crime Unit (after two years)

$32,426.48: returned for retail fraud in the second year

$192,182.58: returned in checks in the second year

Source: Eaton County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Sauter said the unit is close to paying for itself through fees from offenders - a goal set when the program started.

So far, it's collected $178,284 in fees, he said.

The unit not only has helped businesses recoup losses, but saved them time and money by tracking the offenders themselves.

"I think that shows the benefit to the merchant," Sauter said.

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