



The City of New York
Department of Investigation

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DOI ARRESTS MAN WHO SCAMMED BROOKLYN RESTAURATEURS OF \$4,300

-- He pretended to be promoting a City-sponsored program while selling phony advertising time on New York City radio stations--

ROSE GILL HEARN, Commissioner of the New York City Department of Investigation, announced today the arrest of MARK EDWARDS for allegedly scamming at least five Brooklyn small business owners into paying him money to advertise their businesses on major broadcast media stations in the Tri-State area. He allegedly told the business owners that he was sponsored by a purported New York City Department of Small Business Services Small Business Incubator Program ("SBIP") and that the business owners could inexpensively promote their businesses by buying advertising from him.

EDWARDS, 46, of Jamaica, Queens, has been charged with one count of PL 170.10 Forgery in the Second Degree, one count of PL 190.65 Scheme to Defraud in the First Degree, and one count of PI 170.25 Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument Second Degree, Class D and E Felonies. If convicted, he faces up to seven years in jail.

EDWARDS was arrested Wednesday after DOI set up a "sting" operation in which a DOI undercover posed as a partner in a café/restaurant and paid Edwards \$959.88 for advertising time on websites and radio stations. During the sting, EDWARDS told the DOI undercover that he was affiliated with a Small Business Incubator Program and gave the undercover a pamphlet featuring the New York City logo and the words "New York City Department of Small Business Services" and "Business Improvement District."

DOI's investigation began after SBS reported that it had received a call from a Brooklyn restaurant owner who inquired about the low cost advertising through SBS' Small Business Incubator Program. SBS does not have a Small Business Incubator Program. EDWARDS allegedly gave the restaurateur a pamphlet advertising what EDWARDS claimed was the City's Small Business Incubator Program. The pamphlet, which features the City's official seal, offers free and low-cost advertising and promotions through a marketing company called TGE Marketing Company, SBIP, Internet Media Properties, at 244 Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. EDWARDS said that, for \$959.88, he would buy six-months worth of advertising on the restaurateur's behalf with well-known radio stations including, 1010WINS, 106.7LITEFM, 103.5KTU, HOT97, K-ROCK, Z100, POWER106.1FM, CD101.9, and 98.7KISSFM. DOI confirmed that EDWARDS has not conducted business with at least six of the aforementioned radio stations.

EDWARDS allegedly solicited 12 small business owners, five of whom signed contracts worth a total of \$4,319.52. (Four paid \$959.88 each; and, one who said his business could not afford \$959.88, paid half that amount: \$479.94. EDWARDS allegedly promised that business owner limited advertising for the reduced rate. None of the individuals received the advertising they bought.

This investigation is ongoing. DOI Commissioner Rose Gill Hearn asked that anyone who thinks they may have bought advertising from EDWARDS or TGE in connection with this scam to call DOI at (212)825-5959. Commissioner Gill Hearn thanked SBS Commissioner Robert Walsh and his staff for their cooperation and for reporting this misconduct to DOI.

The investigation was conducted by DOI's Inspector General for SBS, Ronald P. Calvosa and members of his staff. The New York County District Attorney's Office Special Prosecutions Bureau is handling the case and Assistant District Attorney Matthew Amatruda will prosecute.

***Get the worms out of the Big Apple.
To report someone ripping off the city, call 311 or DOI directly at (212) 825-5959.***