

HINN HELPS PROMOTE TV SERIES SCAM

Benny Hinn again has demonstrated his lack of discernment by promoting a non-existent television show that is now the subject of a major fraud case in Southern California.

In November 2003, the TV evangelist had Joseph “Jo-Jo” Medawar on his *This Is Your Day* show, where the Lebanese native spoke of a series he was creating about homeland security agents.

“The Lord is doing some wonderful things around the world and also at home and in Hollywood,” Hinn said on the show.

Medawar said the show would be called “DHS: The Series.” He said it would follow the experiences of two agents who are “truly born-again Christians.” He told viewers it was to be “a Christian program, but a mainstream program.” Appearing with Medawar on the show were the three primary actors of the series: Alison Heruth-Waterbury, Tim Cavanaugh, and Stephen Owens.

Medawar claimed to have government approval and the endorsement of President Bush. “The amount of the advisers that have joined the show is almost mind-boggling,” Medawar told Hinn’s audience. He also said that the actors portraying the central figures in the series have undergone “some very high-level training.” While the claims sounded good, court documents allege that they were a scam.

According to a Copley News Service report, Medawar was arrested this past Sept. 23 at his Century City, Calif., office on charges of mail fraud and obstruction of justice. The report said that during the past 30 months, Medawar allegedly had “scammed about 70 investors, many of them linked to Southern California churches.” Medawar, CEO and Executive Producer for his Steeple Distributions production company, is accused of defrauding investors of \$5.5 million.

Medawar had produced a trailer to promote his series, but officials said the piece was made up mostly of video segments from other programs and movies that Medawar had neither produced nor had permission to use. Hinn used the promotional piece on his broadcast. Court documents said Medawar did have “several dealings” with a homeland security official, but that the official told Medawar the DHS name and seal could not be used without permission.

Medawar stated that Matt Crouch, son of Trinity Broadcasting Network founders Paul and Jan Crouch, would be the executive producer of the show. He also claimed that a deal was in the works to allow TBN to simulcast the series as it aired on network television. Medawar told Hinn that at the series premiere, Hinn would be there walking arm in arm with the program’s actors.

“The Lord is a part of the program,” Hinn told his audience. He then highlighted a “revelation” given by Ruckins McKinley, of Life Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., on his Sept. 22, 2003, broadcast. Hinn said, “God is putting Hollywood on the altar. That was the word God gave that night, and it’s happening.” He further offered a word of prophecy of his own that the actors from the series will reach other Hollywood actors for Christ.

Those who have monitored Benny Hinn’s broadcasts and healing campaigns are familiar with his propensity to name-drop and publicize his encounters with celebrities and world leaders. Yet, as with his providing Medawar a worldwide platform for his television scam, he does so at the risk of his friends and viewing audience.

—MKG

RALSON RETIRES AS NCVC DIRECTOR

Colleen Ralson, who headed up the Nauvoo Christian Visitors Center in Nauvoo, Ill., has retired as the center’s director. Ralson, a fourth-generation Mormon who was born and raised in Utah, was director since the center opened in 1988. She became a Christian in her early 20s after rejecting Mormonism. Ralson left a successful career in nursing when she signed on to become the NCVC’s director.

The NCVC was a joint mission project established by Watchman Fellowship and Personal Freedom Outreach. In 1987, the two ministries purchased a building in downtown Nauvoo and launched the NCVC. Ralson was enlisted as director and began converting the structure, which previously had housed a hair salon, the office of the city’s newspaper, and residential apartment, into a place to provide a Christian witness in a community steeped in the skewed faith, facts, and history promulgated by the Mormons.

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