



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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St. Jude Parish Car Raffle Refund Process Concludes Following Independent Review

The Diocese of Erie and St. Jude Parish are providing a final update regarding the refund process connected to the parish car raffle. **The independent review conducted by HBKVG has now been completed and the refund process is officially closed.**

Approximately 700 individuals submitted refund requests, and 644 refunds were issued totaling \$114,488, with the largest refund issued totaling \$9,000.

The refund request period opened on December 6 and closed on January 3. While that was the established deadline, several late submissions were still accommodated during the review process.

Refund checks were mailed in batches via first-class U.S. Postal Service on February 6, February 16 and February 27. Because refunds were issued through the postal system, some checks have been returned by USPS due to delivery issues and will be resent. If a refund check was returned by the postal service, the individual will be contacted directly.

Those who know they are receiving a refund but have not yet received their check due to postal delays are asked to wait until May 1 before contacting the parish office. If a check has not been received by that date, individuals may contact the St. Jude Parish office for assistance. With the completion of the review, the phone lines and email addresses established specifically for the refund process are now closed.

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Raffle participants were notified about the refund process through multiple communication channels. Emails were sent to all email addresses on file for ticket purchasers, and public information was shared through parish announcements, social media, the parish and diocesan websites and local media outlets. Information was also posted on national raffle listing and promotion platforms where the raffle had been advertised to ensure participants had multiple opportunities to request a refund during the established timeframe.

The verification process was intentionally designed to be flexible and to err on the side of the benefit of the doubt when reviewing claims. Participants were asked to provide proof of purchase when possible, and several forms of documentation were accepted, including ticket stubs, receipts, email confirmations, invoices, parish office records and internal logs maintained by the parish. In some cases, individuals believed they had participated in this raffle, but documentation showed the purchase was connected to a different raffle. Refund requests were received from participants throughout the tri-state area of Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio, as well as from 36 states across the country.

Total raffle ticket sales were approximately \$185,000. Of that amount, \$114,488 was returned to participants who requested refunds. While any remaining funds will remain with St. Jude Parish and be used for their intended purpose in support of parish operations and ministries, the parish did not realize a financial gain from the raffle overall. The parish incurred significant expenses in resolving the matter responsibly, including retaining HBKVG as an independent third party to administer the refund process and manage the review. In addition, the raffle vehicle was sold back to the dealer and ultimately sold for less than its original purchase price.

In several instances, individuals who initially requested refunds later chose to return their refund to St. Jude Parish as a donation, indicating they wished to support the parish but preferred to do so on their own terms. The parish is grateful for those gestures of support.

St. Jude Parish and the Diocese of Erie appreciate the patience and cooperation of everyone who participated in the raffle and worked through this process. With the completion of the independent review and the refund process, this matter is now concluded, and St. Jude Parish remains focused on serving its parish community and supporting the ministries that sustain parish life.

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