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Clients Unhappy With Modeling Agency

Firm Says Is Business Is Helping Unknowns

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For many it's a secret fantasy: to be a model or a star to be discovered.



Krystina Vasques, 13, believed her dream was about to become reality when someone from the Wilhelmina Scouting Network handed her mother a card in a New Jersey grocery store.

"I got really excited," Kristina said.

"They said she had the look," said Noeme, her mom.

But there was a price to pay for a shot at a dream. Wilhelmina took pictures of Krystina in their Lawrenceville, N.J. office.

She was told it would cost \$995 plus \$19.95 a month to put them on the corporate Web site. This was a site where all of the company's potential models and actors could be seen by talent agents.

Krystina's family borrowed the money.

"She said my daughter was going to get jobs, like six jobs within this month," Noeme said.

The family was also impressed when told the man who discovered the Backstreet Boys and *NSYNC was the chairman of the Wilhelmina Scouting Network.

Lou Pearlman's corporate office in Orlando was operating WSN branches all over the country.

However, months went by without any news.

NBC 10 went to WSN's Lawrenceville office. The name had changed, but the franchise owner was the same.

Michael Fomkin says he started his own business three weeks ago when WSN went bankrupt.

When asked by NBC 10 if the Vasques's were the target of a scam, he had this response:

"This is not a scam," Fomkin said. "Absolutely not. 100 percent not. I don't appreciate you using that word."

"We give them exposure on a Web-based database," Fomkin added.

The former WSN chairman said he's suing Fomkin and others for deceptive practices.

Fomkin insists his current business is better.

"We don't charge any type of up-front fee," he said.

NBC 10 sent two producers in undercover to the agency.

An interviewer told them that it didn't cost anything to sign with the agency if they had pictures. But the agency may reject their photos if they didn't like the quality.

If they didn't have proper photos, the agency could do them for \$995.

The Better Business Bureau said it has passed on over 80 complaints about WSN offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania to the attorney general's office in Florida.

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