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DETROIT POLICE & WAYNE COUNTY PROSECUTOR DISMANTLE FRAUD RING THAT VICTIMIZED SENIORS

- ***3 suspects face 45 felonies for allegedly scamming \$200K from victims***

Detroit Police and the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office have now completely dismantled a ring of scam artists known as the Golden Years Crew that investigators believe victimized as many as 80 senior citizens out of hundreds of thousands of dollars, Police Chief Warren Evans and Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy announced today. To date, the suspects have been charged in connection with 15 victims.

Officials say the arrest of two of the ring leaders on Wednesday completes the job investigators started 10 months ago that already had resulted in two women being charged in January. One of the women, Devon Page, was convicted and sentenced to prison and her daughter was sentenced to probation. The investigation that has continued since then has now led to the arrest of Page's two main cohorts and charges of operating a criminal enterprise, a 20-year felony.

"These elderly victims have been stripped of their sense of security as well as their money," Chief Evans said. *"We owed it to them to be as tenacious in going after these suspects as they were in going after their victims."*

Chief Evans and Prosecutor Worthy said that although the scams appeared to stop after the January arrests, their staffs would not be satisfied until all of the suspects were brought to justice and that and local senior citizens can breathe much easier today as a result of their efforts.

Page, 41, who already has been serving 14-30 years from her conviction earlier this year, will be arraigned today, along with new suspects Natalie Foster, 42, and Viola West, 39, on charges of operating a Criminal Enterprises (State RICO- 20 year penalty), Conspiracy to Commit Identity (ID) Theft, Credit Card Fraud, and Larceny in a Building.

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Prosecutor Worthy's Elder Abuse Unit, working closely with investigators from DPD's Northeastern District Investigative Operations, has charged the three suspects with a total of 45 felonies. Page and Foster each face 16 felony counts and West faces thirteen. Foster and West also have been charged as habitual offenders.

“Our Elder Abuse Unit allows us to make fighting crimes against vulnerable victims a priority,” said Prosecutor Worthy. *“This case involved a lengthy investigation by DPD and the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. I am proud that we are making significant progress in charging and convicting people who prey upon senior citizens.”*

How the ring operated

According to investigators and prosecutors, the suspects ran a criminal organization, dubbed the Golden Years Crew, which over the past five years targeted and systematically victimized the Detroit's senior citizen population by impersonating social workers, nurses or medical workers.

The suspects would gain access to the victim's home under the pretense of offering to increase benefits or services from official programs, such as Meals on Wheels or USDA Food Stamp Program, to gain access to their personal and financial information. One suspect allegedly would distract her victim by performing a bogus medical exam while the other suspect would take the victims cash, credit cards and personal information. After leaving the residence, the suspects would use the victims' information to withdraw cash, use credit cards and open and pay for utilities. In many cases, the elderly victims ended up being pursued by collection agencies for non-payment of accounts that had been fraudulently opened in their name. One victim was left holding the bill for a \$10,000 mink coat.

Investigators' second push completes ring's dismantling

Page was initially arrested by Detroit Police on January 20, 2010 and later charged on a 22 count felony warrant on charges of Larceny in a Building, Financial Transaction Device, Uttering & Publishing, and Identity Theft. Page was convicted in March, 2010 and received a sentence of 14-30 years in prison. Page's 20-year-old daughter was also arrested and charged with 1 count of Uttering and Publishing. She pleaded guilty and is now on probation.

Investigators at the time knew there were two other women involved and continued to conduct photo line-ups, and gather evidence. Once Foster and West were identified, the investigators' findings were submitted to the Prosecutor, who issued charges against Foster and West, as well as a second round of charges against Page.

“These three women have made it a career out of financially exploiting seniors all under the guise of helping them,” said Robert Spada, who heads up the Prosecutor’s Elder Abuse Unit. *“They stole credit cards, bank debit cards and money to fund their extravagant lifestyle.”*

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For additional information, please contact the Office of Public Information at 313-596-2200.