

Conover Woman Sentenced For Massive Theft

Lincoln Herald Staff

CONOVER--A Conover woman has been sentenced to four years in prison for massive theft.

According to the United States Attorney's Office of the Western District of North Carolina, Andrea Brawley, 46, has been sentenced to four years in prison, followed by three years of supervised release, in connection with stealing more than $300,000 from her elderly relatives.

Dena King, the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina, made the announcement last week. Robert DeWitt, the special agent in charge of the Federal Bureau of Investigation in North Carolina and Sheriff Donald Brown II of the Catawba County Sheriff's Office also joined King in making the announcement.

According to court documents and court proceedings, from August of 2016 to January of 2023, Brawley engaged in a scheme to defraud an elderly couple, identified in court documents as J.S. and M.S., by exploiting her relationship with the victims to steal their money and property. Brawley gained access to the victims' personal and company bank accounts, which she was expected to use to manage the couple's personal and business affairs and to pay routine bills. Instead, Brawley misused her access to transfer funds to herself, causing the victims to sustain significant financial losses.

For example, Brawley failed to make payments due on the victims' home equity line of credit on their residence. As a result, the victims' residence went into foreclosure, and they lost their home. Brawley also drained the victims'

retirement accounts by forging retirement distribution forms without the victims' knowledge and consent, causing them further financial hardship. Over the course of the scheme, Brawley defrauded J.S. and M.S. and M.S.'s company of more than $300,000.

According to court records, Brawley concealed the fraudulent scheme from J.S. and M.S. by making false representations about the cause of the foreclosure and about the state of their finances and personal affairs. Brawley also isolated J.S. and M.S. and limited their contact with their friends and family by taking the victims' cell phones; impersonating them in communications with third parties; transporting them to various locations around the state; and preventing them from returning to their home. In furtherance of the scheme, Brawley engaged in identity theft by using and attempting to use one or more means of identification that belonged to J.S. and M.S., including their names, addresses and unique account numbers.

On Nov. 28, Brawley pled guilty to wire fraud. Currently, she has been released on bond and will be ordered to report to the Federal Bureau of Prisons upon designation of a federal facility.

In sentencing Brawley, U.S. District Judge Kenneth Bell described the defendant's conduct as "outrageous." Bell ordered her to pay $628,174.06 in restitution.

The FBI and the Catawba County Sheriff's Office investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Graham Billings of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Charlotte prosecuted the case.

If you or someone you know is age 60 or older and has been a victim of financial fraud, help is standing by at the National Elder Fraud Hotline: 1-833-FRAUD-11 (1-833-372-8311). This U.S. Department of Justice hotline, managed by the Office for Victims of Crime, is staffed by experienced professionals who provide personalized support to callers by assessing the needs of the victim, and identifying relevant next steps. Case managers will identify appropriate reporting agencies, provide information to callers to assist them in reporting, connect callers directly with appropriate agencies and provide resources and referrals, on a case-by-case basis.

Reporting is the first step. Reporting can help authorities identify those who commit fraud, and reporting certain financial losses due to fraud as soon as possible can increase the likelihood of recovering losses. The hotline is staffed 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday-Friday. English, Spanish and other languages are available.