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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

3 Arrested for Exploiting Elderly and Disabled Adults

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced the arrests of three individuals for exploiting elderly persons and disabled adults. The arrests follow three separate investigations by the Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit. According to the investigations, all three defendants separately stole thousands of dollars from the bank accounts and trust funds of eight elderly and disabled Floridians.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "These defendants were supposed to be caring for the victims, but our investigators found that they exploited their positions of trust to steal thousands of dollars. We will not stand for anyone taking advantage of our seniors and people living with disabilities. I want to commend my Medicaid Fraud Control Unit for investigating these crimes and working every day to protect vulnerable Floridians."

The Attorney General's Medicaid Fraud Control Unit launched all three investigations after receiving tips from the Florida Department of Children and Families Adult Protective Services.

According to one investigation, Hillsborough County resident Evelyn Rankin used a power of attorney form to transfer $25,000 from an elderly victim's annuity fund into a personal checking account. Rankin moved the money into another personal checking account and then a personal savings account, before using the funds to obtain a cashier's check to pay off a car. MFCU worked with the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office to arrest Rankin on one count of exploitation of an elderly person or disabled adult, a second-degree felony. Rankin will be transported to Escambia County to face the charge.

To view the Rankin affidavit, click here.

In a similar case, MFCU and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office arrested Okaloosa resident Amber Griffith on one count of exploitation of an elderly person. Investigators discovered that Griffith used power of attorney to spend more than $31,000 of the victim's money. Griffith's expenditures included taking out more than $8,000 in cash withdrawals, rent payments, utilities and medical bills.

To view the Griffith affidavit, click here.

MFCU also worked with the Escambia County Sheriff's Office to arrest Escambia resident Leaundra Jones for exploiting six male group home residents. Jones served as the group home manager for the victims. Combined, the defendant used more than $6,000 of the victims' personal funds to purchase women's clothing, children's items and multiple personal lunches. Jones faces a third-degree felony charge of exploitation.

To view the Jones affidavit, click here.

Attorney General Moody's MFCU will prosecute all three cases through a special agreement with William Eddins, State Attorney for the First Judicial Circuit. Supervising Assistant Attorney General Christi Hankins will lead the prosecution.