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News Release

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Eagan couple plead guilty to aggravated identity theft, conspiracy to falsely use identification documents

The second of two defendants pleaded guilty yesterday in federal court in connection with a scheme to steal others' identities for the purpose of fraudulently obtaining money and prescription drugs.

Amy Ruth Bergquist, 30, Eagan, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess with intent to use unlawfully five or more identification documents which were not issued to them and one count of aggravated identity theft. She entered her plea Oct. 8 in St. Paul before U.S. District Court Judge Paul Magnuson. The other defendant, Eric Christopher Thorsen, 25, Eagan, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy and one count of aggravated identity theft on Sept. 16.

According to their respective plea agreements, from August 2007 through March 8, 2008, the two admitted they knowingly possessed with intent to use unlawfully five or more identification documents which were not issued to either of them for their use. Both Bergquist and Thorsen also admitted to knowingly transferring, possessing and using, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person with intent to commit an unlawful activity.

Thorsen admitted to knowingly stealing and taking mail from other people's mailboxes, stealing other individuals' identification documents and using other people's identification documents to purchase products from unsuspecting merchants and to obtain money fraudulently from unsuspecting victims' bank accounts. Bergquist admitted to aiding and abetting Thorsen in these actions.

Bergquist and Thorsen each admitted that their scheme involved bank fraud, and that the total loss amount is between \$30,000 and \$120,000. They also admitted that on July 30, 2007, and on Sept. 29, 2007, they were in possession of identification documents of other persons. Those documents were found by police while executing a search warrant in the two separate hotel rooms where Thorsen was staying.

According to their indictment, some of the targeted victims were people the two met on the

Internet. Thorsen and Bergquist allegedly placed advertisements on the Internet seeking to meet other adults to engage in sexual acts, and would meet those who responded to the ads in either a hotel room or a private residence. The indictment alleges that while Thorsen and Bergquist were inside one of these locations they would steal, among other items, an identification document of one of the other adults.

Thorsen and Bergquist each face a maximum penalty of five years in prison on the conspiracy count, and a mandatory two-year minimum prison term on the aggravated identity theft count. Judge Magnuson will determine their sentences at a future date.

This case is the result of an investigation by the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the U.S. Secret Service, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Minnesota Financial Crimes Task Force and the Roseville Police Department, with assistance from other local law enforcement. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys Erica H. MacDonald and Kimberly A. Svendsen.