

Department of Justice

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Two Central Illinois Women Sentenced for Conspiracy to Traffic Counterfeit Goods

***“Purse Lady” Sold More Than \$1 Million in Fake Brand-Name Purses, Wallets, Sunglasses
More Than \$1.6 Million in Goods Seized***

PEORIA, Ill. – Two Central Illinois women, Jannette Grant, 51, of Bloomington, and Kimberly Nein, 50, of Argenta, Ill., who did business as “The Purse Lady,” were sentenced to prison terms today for conspiracy to traffic in counterfeit goods. U.S. District Judge Joe Billy McDade sentenced Grant, of the 600 block of S. McClun Street, Bloomington, to serve 36 months in federal prison; Nein, of the 200 block of E. Broadway, Argenta, was sentenced to 24 months in federal prison. Both were ordered to pay restitution in the amount of \$3,879. and were ordered to report to the federal Bureau of Prisons on Oct. 9, 2012, to begin serving their respective prison terms.

On April 25, 2012, Grant and Nein each waived indictment and entered pleas of guilty to operating a business known as “The Purse Lady,” which offered items for sale that falsely bore trademarks of Coach, Kate Spade, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, Dooney & Bourke, Prada, Tiffany & Co., and others. Goods were sold throughout Central Illinois, including at various businesses, at home parties, also known as “purse parties,” through the mail, and at a warehouse in Argenta owned by Nein. Grant and Nein admitted that they traveled to Chicago and New York regularly to purchase inventory. According to court documents, Grant and Nein advertised their items for sale as “replica / knockoff” and stated that all references to brands were for ‘entertainment and novelty purposes only’ and “these companies are not affiliated with us in any way.”

According to court documents, during search warrants executed by law enforcement agents on May 12, 2011, at Grant’s home and at Nein’s warehouse in Argenta, agents recovered more than 15,000 counterfeit items with an estimated manufacturers’ suggested retail price of approximately \$1.6 million. The items included 2,000 purses, 900 wallets, 400 sunglasses, 10,900 emblems and medallions, and other items. Further, agents recovered various items that Grant surrendered, including a 2008 Dodge Caravan, a 2003 BMW, and \$18,052 in currency at her home. Agents also recovered \$4,487 from the business’s bank account and \$80,000 held in a safe deposit box. Grant previously agreed to forfeit \$47,522, the amount Grant had paid on two homes, at 1502 E. Grove and 615 E. Walnut Street, in Bloomington, in lieu of forfeiture of real estate.

The charges were investigated by the Bloomington Police Department, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Darilynn J. Knauss.

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