



Department of Justice

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Pulaski County Woman Sentenced to 33 Months as part of Department of Justice's Elder Fraud Crackdown

LONDON, Ky. – Mitzi Shawn Sears, 59, of Nancy, was sentenced to 33 months in federal prison Monday by United States District Judge Robert E. Wier for taking over half a million dollars from an elderly couple as part of a bank fraud scheme.

Sears must pay \$502,780.10 in restitution and forfeit her rights to a property she purchased with the victims' money. Upon release from prison, Sears will be on supervised release for five years.

According to her plea agreement, Sears convinced the victims to buy a certain piece of real property in Pulaski County with her as an investment. Sears then told the victims that the property was part of a lawsuit and they needed to provide more funds to pay attorneys and others in order to finish the transaction, but the transaction never existed. To keep the victims unaware of the scheme, Sears pretended to be various people in phone calls and drafted fake emails. When the victims ran out of money to give to Sears, they took out a \$40,000 loan and provided their bank with the false information that Sears had given to them.

Sears used those checks to purchase a different property in Nancy that she must now forfeit. Additionally, Sears forged 16 checks belonging to the victims.

“Working with our law enforcement partners, we are committed to holding accountable those who engage in financial exploitation of elderly victims,” said Robert M. Duncan, Jr., United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Kentucky. “The defendant’s fraud scheme deprived the victims’ of a substantial amount of money. The sentence imposed reflects the seriousness of her offense.”

U. S. Attorney Duncan, Special Agent in Charge James Robert Brown, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Commissioner Richard W. Sanders, Kentucky State Police jointly announced the sentence.

The investigation was conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Kentucky State Police. Assistant U.S. Attorney Dmitriy Slavin represented the United States.

This prosecution is part of the Department of Justice's efforts, together with federal and state partner agencies, to investigate and combat elder financial exploitation and obtain restitution for vulnerable victims. For information on the Kentucky Elder Justice Task Force, including how to report abuses, please visit: <https://www.justice.gov/usao-edky/elder-justice-task-force>.

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