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CUYAHOGA COUNTY PROSECUTOR**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, July 2, 2019**

**Thief Targeting Elderly Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison for  
Four-Month Spree That Spanned Northeast Ohio**

CLEVELAND – Cuyahoga County Prosecutor Michael C. O'Malley announced that Carlene McSwain, 57, was sentenced to 15 years in prison, for stealing wallets from 18, mostly elderly, victims in grocery stores throughout Cuyahoga, Lake, Medina, and Portage Counties.

“This serial thief was like a shark in the water, striking at least 18 vulnerable victims when they least expected,” said Prosecutor O'Malley. “She has nobody to blame but herself for her 15-year sentence.”

On July 9, 2018, a 79-year-old victim arrived at the Solon Police Department to report that her wallet had been stolen while shopping at a nearby grocery store that same day. Her wallet contained cash, multiple credit cards, and her driver's license. She mentioned that, while shopping, she was being followed by a middle-aged woman who kept asking her questions. She stated that two of the credit cards were fraudulently used that same day at a local department store without her consent.

On July 28, 2018, a 97-year-old victim reported a similar incident to the Parma Police Department. The victim and her daughter, 70, were shopping at a nearby grocery store when they had noticed the victim's wallet was missing while they were waiting in the check-out lane.

Between July 15, 2018 and November 14, 2018, 16 similar incidents were reported throughout Northeast Ohio: Middleburg Heights, Sagamore Hills, Strongsville, North Olmsted, Broadview Heights, Rocky River, Eastlake, Medina, and Ravenna.

Victims, averaging in age of 74 years old, reported that their wallets were stolen from their purses while shopping at grocery stores. Some victims mentioned they were approached by another shopper who engaged in conversation or offered to help them read grocery labels.

Detectives from multiple police departments conducted investigations that linked the incidents to Carlene McSwain and her 38-year-old daughter, Tawana McSwain. Video surveillance helped identify both defendants and their vehicle.

After stealing the wallets, the defendants used the victims' credit cards, gift cards, and cash to purchase iPads, smart watches, Xboxes, and other items at retail stores.

Carlen McSwain pled guilty to multiple counts including Identity Fraud, Money Laundering, Aggravated Theft, and Theft. She was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Tawana McSwain is currently scheduled to appear in court for a pretrial hearing on July 3, 2019. She faces charges of Identity Fraud, Theft, Money Laundering, and Complicity.

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