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DES Adult Protective Services Financial Exploitation Unit Helps Bring Thief to Justice

PHOENIX – The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) Adult Protective Services (APS) Financial Exploitation Unit has just closed the books on a case of an elderly woman whose daughter stole hundreds of thousands of dollars from her.

Over the course of a year—from September of 2012 to late August 2013—the daughter of 93-year-old Wanda Adams drained more than \$650,000 from Wanda’s checking account through a total of 59 electronic transfers. When the bank balance dropped to less than \$800, bankers got suspicious and notified APS, which put its Financial Exploitation investigators on the case. They discovered daughter Janine Adams of Phoenix—who had access to her mother’s account, and power of attorney--had spent thousands of dollars on truckloads of merchandise from online shopping outlets, including E-Bay and the Home Shopping Network.

“To think a daughter could do this to her mother is disgusting,” said Director Tim Jeffries. “But unfortunately, incidents like this are extremely common. That’s why we created the DES Financial Exploitation Unit – one of the few of its kind in the country. Financial exploitation of vulnerable adults will not be tolerated. Our exemplary unit will find you and bring you to justice.”

“This case highlights the severe emotional and financial impact that is placed on vulnerable adults when exploitation occurs, especially in their final years,” said Bobby Rivera, APS Program Administrator.

Fifty-eight year-old Janine Adams was indicted by a Maricopa County grand jury in December 2015. She pleaded guilty to charges against her and in April was sentenced in Maricopa County Superior Court to three years in prison and supervised probation.

Wanda Adams passed away in 2014, before her daughter was brought to justice. Her son, Bill, told investigators his mother suffered unnecessary duress as a result of the crime in her final months.

The APS Financial Exploitation Unit consists of a staff of five, with four investigators dedicated to tracking down the financial clues. In addition, the DES Office of the Inspector General created two new positions for detectives with law enforcement authority who will be able to apprehend suspects.

If you suspect and would like to report abuse, call the hotline number at 1-877-SOS-ADULT (1-877-767-2385). It’s available from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. An online report can be filed 24 hours a day, seven days a week at <https://des.az.gov/report-adult-abuse>.

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The Arizona Department of Economic Security makes Arizona stronger by helping Arizonans reach their potential through temporary assistance for those in need, and care for the vulnerable.

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