

PRESS RELEASE

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Madison, Wisconsin -- Erik C. Peterson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Amanda Ferch, 37, Brooklyn, Wis. and Randy Ruth, 37, Madison, were sentenced on January 6 and January 7, respectively, by U.S. District Judge Barbara B. Crabb for their involvement in a \$478,000 scheme to defraud Dane County Title Company. Both defendants pleaded guilty to mail fraud on October 16, 2008.

Judge Crabb sentenced Ferch to 33 months in prison, followed by a three-year term of supervised release. Judge Crabb also ordered Ferch to pay restitution of \$347,190.99 to Dane County Title Company. Judge Crabb sentenced Ruth to three years of probation, with the first sixty days to be served in a community treatment facility where Ruth will receive treatment for substance abuse and mental health problems. Judge Crabb ordered Ruth to pay \$182,515.85 to Dane County Title Company.

Ferch worked at Dane County Title in the bookkeeping department from October 23, 2000 to June 20, 2008, and eventually became the accounting supervisor. Ferch used her position to forge signatures on company checks made payable either to herself or to Ruth.

Ferch created false entries in the company's general ledger in order to conceal her embezzlement scheme. She also intercepted the cancelled checks that were mailed from the bank to the company, and culled out the forged checks from the bank statements in a further attempt to conceal her activities.

Ferch confessed to Madison Police detectives and cooperated in the investigation. Ferch explained that she made the checks payable to herself as well as to Ruth. Ruth cashed his checks and deposited the funds into his personal bank account. Ruth would then write checks to Ferch in an effort to cycle the money back to her.

Ferch told the police that she and Ruth were each spending \$400 per day on crack cocaine and that most of the stolen funds were used to purchase crack cocaine. Some of the money was also used to pay bills and for gambling at the Ho-Chunk Casino. The scheme lasted from December 2005 to July 1, 2008, and involved 139 forged checks totaling \$478,614.

The charges against the defendants were the result of an investigation conducted by the Madison Police Department. The prosecution of the case has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Daniel J. Graber.

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