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**M E D I A     R E L E A S E**

Today, the last of seven defendants in a statewide theft ring was sentenced to prison out of the Isabella County Trial Court. The seven men were charged with conducting a criminal enterprise, along with several other felony theft crimes, relative to a long running scheme of stealing copper wire from stores all over Michigan, primarily in 2010. Convicted defendants include:

- **Anthony Schafer II**, Muskegon, age 24  
Convicted of: Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Receiving and Concealing \$1,000 - \$20,000  
Sentenced: June 21, 2011; 42 to 240 months  
Restitution: \$10,000
- **Joshua Bennett**, Pierson, age 26  
Convicted of: Felony Retail Theft in the Will County Circuit Court, Joliet, Illinois  
Sentenced: May 24, 2011; 96 months\*  
Restitution: \$10,000
- **Bruce Walters**, Sand Lake, age 37  
Convicted of: Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Receiving and Concealing \$1,000 - \$20,000  
Sentenced: March 28, 2011; 51 to 240 months  
Restitution: \$10,000
- **Joshua Guiles**, Sand Lake, age 33  
Convicted of : Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree  
Sentenced: March 25, 2011; 39 - 240 months  
Restitution: \$10,000

\* Note: Illinois allows for prison credits which would result in a release in approximately 48 months. Michigan does not allow for such credits, and prisoners must serve at least their

- **Daniel Johnson**, Cedar Springs, age 36  
 Convicted of: Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Receiving and Concealing \$1,000 - \$20,000  
 Sentenced: March 21, 2011; 39 - 240 months  
 Restitution: \$10,000
  
- **Austin Vodry**, Grand Rapids, age 36  
 Convicted of: Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree  
 Sentenced: March 21, 2011; 51 - 240 months
  
- **Kevin White**, Sand Lake, age 34  
 Convicted of: Conducting a Criminal Enterprise, Retail Fraud 1<sup>st</sup> Degree, Receiving and Concealing \$1,000 - \$20,000  
 Sentenced: March 21, 2011; 33 - 240 months

The men were charged after a lengthy investigation by Michigan State Police detectives. They primarily stole spools of copper wire from large home improvement stores. Typically several of the men, working together, would enter a store and load a push cart, often with more than a dozen spools of wire. They would cover the spools with other objects, such as grill covers, then one or two men would distract the cashier, while another would push the cart past the register area and out the door. Store personnel would soon become aware that large inventories of wire were missing, leading to the examination of store surveillance videos by police. Ultimately, the Michigan State Police, led by Detective Jerry Carter out of the Mt. Pleasant Post, and Detectives Ed Doyle and Mike Morey out of the Lakeview and Ionia Posts began tracking the thefts, and identifying the suspects. As the investigation was nearing completion, these detectives were able to conduct surveillance of some of the defendants actually stealing wire from multiple stores on a particular day in May, 2010. While copper wiring was the primary target of these defendants, they would also steal computers, televisions and other expensive electronic merchandise from various retailers.

Thefts occurred in Mt. Pleasant, Houghton Lake, Bay City, Ludington, Ann Arbor, Battle Creek and other locations in not only Michigan, but Ohio, Illinois and as far away as Louisiana

Isabella County Prosecuting Attorney Larry J. Burdick credits the hard work of Doyle, Morey and especially Carter, who led the investigation, which took the better part of a year.

“Detective Carter and his fellow detectives did not treat this simply as individual thefts which took place in their counties, but as a criminal organization which was stealing tens of thousands of dollars from retailers all over Michigan and other states. On those rare occasions during the past few years, when one or more of these men happened to get caught, they typically were convicted of lower level theft crimes and sentenced to short jail terms. It never slowed them down. Carter and his colleagues put in an incredible amount of work to gather the evidence needed to indicate that these thefts were not isolated acts, but part of a simple but efficient widespread theft ring. They put in the time to ‘connect the dots.’”

All of the men except Bennett was convicted and sentenced in the Isabella County Trial Court by Judge Mark Duthie. Bennett was apprehended in Joliet, Illinois stealing wire, before he could be arrested on the Isabella County warrant. Rather than undergo the cost and logistical problems with bringing him back from the Illinois corrections system, the Isabella County Prosecutor’s Office worked with their counterpart in Illinois to obtain a doubling of Bennett’s prison sentence in Illinois, in exchange for dismissal of his charges here. Bennett, like the other six defendants, was ordered to pay \$10,000 in restitution to stores in Mt. Pleasant and elsewhere in Michigan.

\* \* \* \* \*

Also linked with this media release is a photograph and video clip showing five of the defendants stealing copper wire. The clip and photo shows Daniel Johnson blocking one of the cashiers with a large board, while Bruce Walters distracts the other cashier (he is not visible in the photo) and White and Schafer “push out” a cart of wire hidden by a grill cover.



Larry J. Burdick  
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