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October 2, 2014

MADIGAN: MAN SENTENCED TO NINE YEARS FOR STUDENT LOAN FRAUD IN DUPAGE COUNTY

Ring of Chicago Area Defendants Commit Identity Theft to Obtain Over \$300,000 in Financial Aid

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced a Chicago man was sentenced to nine years in prison and ordered to pay \$319,000 in restitution for his role in a scheme to defraud the U.S. Department of Education and the College of DuPage of financial aid.

Lorin Brown, 36, of Monee, was sentenced by Judge Kathryn E. Creswell in DuPage County Criminal Court and ordered to pay restitution of \$319,670. Brown was found guilty in an August bench trial of identity theft, theft by deception, theft of government property, continuing financial crimes enterprise, mail fraud and wire fraud.

Brown was charged by Madigan's office along with defendants Dasia Blue, Olympia Blue and Jessie Wright for their scheme to steal identities and use the personal identifying information to apply for financial aid from the U.S. Department of Education.

Between January 2012 and February 2013, Lorin and the four defendants used the stolen information to take out student loans with the U.S. Department of Education totaling \$319,670 to take online classes at College of DuPage and the University of Phoenix.

The loans were issued in the form of debit cards and checks through U.S. Bank and Chase Bank. The debit cards and checks were made out to the identity theft victims but instead directed to the defendants in varying amounts, from \$7,000 to \$13,000. A search warrant executed in February 2013 at the home of Brown and Dasia Blue recovered documents and computer records containing the identities of more than 50 people. In addition to the losses of the identity theft victims, College of DuPage lost more than \$35,000 in tuition.

"The defendant took part in an extensive, coordinated scheme using over 50 stolen identities to obtain fraudulent funds," Madigan said. "This case is yet another example of how identity thieves use our personal information to cash in on their illegal schemes, and it reinforces the need to incorporate commonsense precautions into our daily routines to limit our exposure to identity theft."

Madigan encouraged Illinois residents to take the following steps to protect their personal information:

- **Review your credit reports for unauthorized accounts.** You are entitled to one free credit report from each of the three nationwide credit reporting agencies per year. Go to www.annualcreditreport.com, or call 1-877-322-8228 to order your credit reports. Make sure all the information is correct. If not, immediately contact the credit reporting agency to request that the information be explained or corrected.
- **Regularly review your bank and credit card statements** to make sure there are no unauthorized transactions. Contest any unauthorized charges immediately by contacting your bank using the toll-free number on the back of your credit or debit card. Prompt reporting of unauthorized charges is critical to limit your liability, particularly if you are a debit card user because liability depends on how quickly you report a lost or stolen card. For instance, if you report a lost or stolen debit card before any unauthorized transactions occur, you are not responsible for any of the unauthorized charges, but if you make the report within two business days of losing your card, you can be liable for up to \$50 of unauthorized charges. After two days, reporting lost or stolen cards can increase your liability anywhere from \$500 and up.
- **Set up Transaction Alerts** on your accounts to receive notifications when your credit or debit card is used above a certain dollar amount, so if someone uses your card without authorization, you'll receive a text message or email and can immediately call your card issuer to dispute the charge.
- **Consider putting a security freeze on your credit.** A security freeze, also known as a credit freeze, essentially locks down your personal data at the consumer reporting agency until an individual gives permission for the release of the data,

which can prevent someone from taking out credit in your name. You can easily have the freeze lifted when you want to allow a company to check your credit if, for instance, you are opening new accounts or purchasing a car or home.

The case was investigated by College of DuPage Police Department with assistance from the U.S. Secret Service. Investigations uncovered the scheme after one of the identity theft victims, who had never enrolled for classes at either of the schools, began receiving notices and bills for tuition payments, according to the Attorney General's charges.

Assistant Attorneys General Edward Snow and Albert Berry III handled the case for Madigan's Financial Crimes Bureau.

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