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For Immediate Release

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DA Warns of Purse Snatchers Targeting Elderly Women at Supermarkets

Multiple Defendants Charged with Elderly Theft, Robbery, Burglary

In the wake of a criminal case filed against three defendants, San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) is warning the public about criminals targeting elderly women at shopping centers throughout the county to steal their purses while they shop. Three defendants have been arrested and arraigned in a current case that involves 15 separate victims, most of whom are elderly Filipino/Asian women between the ages of 64 and 89.

The incidents happened between January and April of this year in the cities of San Diego and National City. The thieves canvas shopping centers and wait for elderly women to leave stores and walk to their cars. When the victims put their purses in the passenger seat of their vehicles as they load up their groceries, the defendants pull their car up, one of them gets out and grabs the purse off the front seat of the car and runs to the getaway car. In most cases, the suspects use the victims' stolen credit cards and pawn any other valuable items. While the value of the stolen property may not always include a large amount of money, the emotional impact to these victims is often significant.

Defendant Shawntece Davis, 32, was arraigned in San Diego Superior Court today, while her two co-defendants, Kenya Frazier, 29, and David Anthony Foster, 67, were arraigned last week. All three face multiple counts of theft from an elder, robbery, burglary, and conspiracy to commit elder theft, among other charges. The defendants face up to 8 and 17 years in state prison if convicted of all charges.

“Those who prey on the elderly should understand that these crimes will not be tolerated and they will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law,” DA Stephan said. “In this case the defendants were caught, thanks to great investigative work and collaboration from the National City and the San Diego Police Departments. In order to keep our community safe, especially the elderly and vulnerable, it is important that everyone remains vigilant and aware of their surroundings and hold on to their personal belongings while they are out shopping.”

Prosecutors say these types of crimes are occurring in every area of the county. They advise women in busy shopping centers to avoid shopping with large purses and never leave purses unattended in the shopping cart or open in their vehicles while focused on other tasks.

“Abuse and crimes against the elderly come in many forms,” said SDPD Chief of Police Scott Wahl. “It’s sickening to see criminals prey on our most vulnerable community members. We are committed to ensuring anyone who victimizes our seniors will be brought to justice and held accountable for their actions.”

Law enforcement is also reminding the public that if you see something, say something. And if you believe you witness suspicious activity in shopping center parking lots, document license plate numbers and physical descriptions of those involved.

“I am incredibly proud of our officers working closely with the San Diego Police Department for their exceptional work on these series-related cases,” said National City Police Chief Alejandro Hernandez. “This case highlights the importance of teamwork in safeguarding our community.”

In North County, the DA’s Family Protection Unit is also prosecuting similar but separate cases with theft rings targeting elderly women shopping. Thieves are taking the wallets from purses when victims put their purses in the shopping cart and don’t pay attention while they shop. Deputy District Attorney Scott Pirrello, who leads the DA’s Elder Abuse Unit, is prosecuting the case involving the three defendants Davis, Frazier, and Foster.

[World Elder Abuse Awareness Day](#) was last Saturday and serves as a reminder that we need to continue to work together to help our elders avoid becoming exploited and victimized. Older people throughout the United States lose an estimated \$2.6 billion or more annually due to elder financial abuse and exploitation. Elder abuse also creates health care and legal costs for our society. The District Attorney’s [Elder Abuse Unit](#), which is part of the Family Protection Division, works to protect seniors through crime prevention outreach and prosecution of those who prey on seniors.

If a situation appears to be life threatening or a crime is in progress, call 9-1-1 or your local law enforcement agencies such as police and Sheriff’s departments. Some agencies have specialized units that focus on crimes involving elder and dependent adults. If you believe elder or dependent abuse has occurred, call Adult Protective Services at 1-800-339-4661.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.