

Financial Crimes Task Force seeks public's help with immigration/lottery scam - 04/06/2012

Seminole Co. Fla., (04/06/12)-The Seminole County Sheriff's Office Financial Crimes Task Force is seeking the public's help in identifying two suspects, a Hispanic male and female, believed to have carried out a immigration / lottery scam by convincing victims to provide them with cash to help redeem a bogus lottery ticket.

On March 8th, the female suspect approached the victim while she shopped at a local department store in Lake Mary. The suspect engaged the victim in conversation, indicating that she was seeking financial assistance and needed directions to the local Immigration Center. The male suspect, posing as a stranger, joined in the conversation, stating he could help and knew the location of the center. He convinced the victim to give them both a ride to the location.

While en route, the female suspect told the victim that she had a winning lotto ticket, but couldn't cash it in due to her illegal immigration status. The male suspect called and confirmed the lottery ticket in the presence of the victim. Preying on the victim's sympathy, the male suspect convinced her to, jointly, purchase the ticket from the female suspect. The male suspect was then taken to an apartment complex to retrieve his portion of cash to purchase the lottery ticket. He provided his portion of the funds to the victim to hold in order to win over her confidence. The suspects then escorted the victim while she withdrew a large sum of money from her bank account in order to purchase the ticket, with the understanding that she would keep a large portion of the winnings. After the transaction was complete, the female suspect feigned illness and convinced the victim to stop at a local convenience store and purchase over the counter medication. The victim left the cash in the vehicle with the suspects and when she returned both suspects and the money were gone.

Investigators have recently seen four cases involving this scam in Seminole County and recognize that it is also occurring in other parts of the country. The victims targeted locally have been Hispanic females over the age of 60. Investigators believe this couple may be responsible for at least two of the four cases. Investigators also caution the public to be aware and contact law enforcement if you believe you may have fallen victim to similar scams.

Please see the attached surveillance photos of the suspects. Anyone with information regarding the identity of the suspects is urged to contact the Seminole County Sheriff's Office at 407-665-6650.