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Florida Man Pleads Guilty For Role In \$30 Million Telemarketing Scam That Victimized Over 22,000 People

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 17, 2011

Stephen R. Wigginton, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that on November 17, 2011, Steven Folan, 24, of Palm Beach County Florida, pleaded guilty in federal court in East St. Louis to a thirteen count indictment charging him with one count of Conspiracy to Commit Mail Fraud and Wire Fraud and twelve counts of Mail Fraud. The indictment alleged that Folan and others were involved in a telemarketing scam, operating in Florida, that bilked over 22,000 victims of \$30 million dollars. The indictment alleged that the scam victimized consumers in all fifty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, all ten Canadian provinces and the Northwest Territory of Canada. There were at least 54 victims in twenty eight (28) of the thirty eight (38) counties comprising the Southern District of Illinois.

The criminal indictment alleged that Folan was a manager of Universal Marketing Solutions, and later Creative Vacation Solutions, in Palm Beach County, Florida. The indictment alleged that the scheme began October, 2007, and continued through at least January, 2010. Telemarketers for Universal Marketing Solutions and Creative Vacation Solutions placed cold calls to timeshare owners and then falsely represented that their company had actual buyers for the owners' timeshare property. Telemarketers they supervised then solicited advanced fees of up to several thousand dollars from each victim in purported closing costs that they promised would be refunded to the owner once the closing on the property occurred. Many timeshare owners were told that their closings were scheduled within the next sixty to ninety days. Despite collecting fees from 22,000 victims, these companies were not successful in selling a single timeshare unit, the indictment alleged. Defendants and their co-conspirators, the indictment alleged, simply pocketed the closing costs.

Folan faces a penalty of up to 25 years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$250,000, and a term of supervised release of up to five years at his sentencing, currently set for March 9, 2012.

This is one of several prosecutions by the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois related to Universal Marketing Solutions and Creative Vacation Solutions. On June 30, 2011, Jennifer Kirk, alleged to be a principal of both companies, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit mail and wire fraud for her role in the scam. Her sentencing is scheduled for January 9, 2012, in East St. Louis. On August 19, 2011, Joel Intravaia pled guilty to conspiracy charges and is scheduled to be sentenced on December 9, 2011. Ralph Johnson entered a guilty plea to conspiracy charges filed in a criminal information on September 8, 2011, and his sentencing is scheduled for December 16, 2011, in East St. Louis. On September 22, 2011, Kenneth Foote and Joseph Grizzanti were indicted by a federal grand jury in East St. Louis. On October 7, 2011, each filed a consent to transfer their case to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in order to plead guilty to the charges there.

Two other men were indicted with Folan and their trial is currently scheduled to begin on December 12, 2011, in East St. Louis. Note that an indictment is simply a charge against a defendant. Each defendant is presumed to be innocent and is entitled to a fair trial on the charge at which the government must prove the defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

This prosecution follows an investigation by the St. Louis Field Office of the Chicago Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service, assisted by the Boynton Beach (Florida) Police Department and the Florida Attorney General's office. The prosecution of the case is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce E. Reppert.

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