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## Former Florida Woman Sentenced To Over 15 Years For \$30 Million Telemarketing Scam That Victimized Over 22,000 People

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 9, 2012

Stephen R. Wigginton, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Illinois, announced today that Jennifer Kirk, age 31, of Freehold, New Jersey, formerly of Lake Worth, Florida, was sentenced on January 9, 2012, to 188 months for Conspiracy to Commit Mail and Wire Fraud. Kirk also was sentenced to five (5) years supervised release after completion of her prison term, during which she is barred from any involvement in the telemarketing industry. In addition, Kirk must pay a \$15,000 fine and a \$100 assessment.

The charge arose out of a telemarketing scam operated in Florida that bilked over 22,000 victims of \$30 million dollars. Kirk 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 seven (27) of the thirty eight (38) counties comprising the Southern District of Illinois.

Kirk pled guilty on June 30, 2011, to a criminal information which alleged that she operated Universal Marketing Solutions and later Creative Vacation Solutions in Palm Beach County, Florida between October, 2007 and December 1, 2009. She employed telemarketers who placed cold calls to timeshare owners and then falsely represented that their company had actual buyers for the owners' timeshare property. Her telemarketers 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. Despite collecting fees from 22,000 victims, her companies were not successful in selling a single timeshare unit, the information alleged. Defendant, and her co-conspirators, the information alleged, simply pocketed the closing costs.

Several others have been charged in Kirk's telemarketing scam. On August 17, 2011, a federal grand jury charged Ryan Brazel, Brian Morris and Steve Folan in a multi-count indictment for their involvement in the alleged scheme. Folan pled guilty on November 17, 2011. His sentencing is set for March 9, 2012, in East St. Louis. Trial for Brazel and Morris is currently set for February 27, 2012. Joel Intravaia pled guilty to conspiracy in an information filed on August 19, 2011. He was sentenced to 60 months imprisonment and three (3) years supervised release on December 9, 2011. Ralph Johnson entered a guilty plea to conspiracy charges filed in a criminal information on September 8, 2011. He was sentenced on December 16, 2011, to 46 months imprisonment and two (2) years supervised release. On September 21, 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. Sentencing for Foote and Grizzanti is scheduled for March 30, 2012, in the Southern District of Florida. Jeffrey Tracey Fields was charged with conspiracy in a criminal information on October 25, 2011. He filed a consent to transfer his case to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in order to plead guilty to the charges there. John Thomas Egan pled guilty to conspiracy charges filed in a criminal information on January 6, 2012. His sentencing is set for April 16, 2012.

In a related prosecution, Darnel Disroe, Michael Lentine, and Michael Starace were each convicted and sentenced to prison for their role in the operation of Real Timeshare Marketing, another timeshare resale scheme operating in Palm Beach County Florida. The indictment charges that Real Timeshare Marketing was a spin-off of Kirk's Creative Vacation Solutions and used the same fraudulent sales pitch. Lentine was sentenced on January 7, 2011, to 51 months imprisonment and five (5) years supervised release. Starace was sentenced on January 28, 2011, to 18 months imprisonment and five (5) years supervised release. On May 6, 2011, Disroe was sentenced to 121 months imprisonment and five (5) years supervised release.

So far, eleven (11) individuals have been charged in connection with the operation of Creative Vacation Solutions and Universal Marketing Solutions. The investigation is continuing into those timeshare resale scams.

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"Our office has an established track record of targeting and dismantling criminal organizations, wherever they are located, that prey on unwary consumers," said U.S. Attorney Stephen Wigginton. "We hope to continue to get justice for the American consumer by working closely with our partners, the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, the Federal Trade Commission and state Attorneys General," said Wigginton. "Florida will not tolerate people who prey on those trying to sell their timeshares," stated Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi. "This case is a great example of law enforcement working together to protect consumers."

The criminal charges follow an investigation by the St. Louis Field Office of the Chicago Division of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Florida Attorney General's Office. The prosecution of the case is being handled by Assistant U.S. Attorney Bruce K. Sheppert and United States Attorney Stephen B. Wigginton.



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