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Defendant in "Sweetheart Scam" Pleads to Conning Elderly Victim

A Panaroma City woman accused of perpetrating a "Sweetheart Scam" against an 81-year-old man whom she met through a personal ad pleaded no contest today, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Myrta Molina, 53, pleaded to one felony count of theft from an elder or dependent adult. Los Angeles County Superior Court Judge Larry Knupp of the Norwalk Branch immediately sentenced the defendant to 248 days in county jail and five years of formal probation.

Deputy District Attorney Tina Hooks of the Elder Abuse Section said Molina also was ordered to pay $6,500 in restitution and to stay away from the victim and his residence. Additionally, the defendant was ordered to refrain from placing advertisements seeking relationships, the prosecutor added.

Molina met the victim when he responded to a personal ad in a senior citizen publication. Within two months of meeting, Molina began asking the victim for money to pay for her rent and utilities, the prosecutor said.

Preliminary hearing testimony revealed that in July 2013 the victim twice attempted to make bank withdrawals for $82,000 for his "girlfriend." The crimes came to light when a bank teller did not allow the transactions to go through and alerted authorities.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to seeking justice for victims of crime and enhancing public safety. Annually, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office prosecutes more than 60,000 felonies and 140,000 misdemeanor crimes.