



MEDIA RELEASE

Investigative Unit

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Six People, One Lorain Business Indicted on Food Stamp Fraud Related Crimes

(Columbus) – On Wednesday, six people and a business were indicted by the Lorain County Grand Jury for their role in a food stamp fraud operation, which contributed to \$582,000 in fraud.

The indictments came 15-months after Ohio Investigative Unit agents and officers with the Lorain Police Department and the Lorain County Drug Task Force conducted search warrants at the Adames Deli & Grocery, Inc., 1700 East 31st St., Lorain.

Adames Deli & Grocery, Inc. was indicted on one count of theft and 10 counts of illegal use of food stamps. Rafeal Coll, 41, Lorain, was indicted on 10 counts of illegal use of food stamps. Lorain residents Erica Perez, 29, Lydia Vega, 31, and Monica Perez, 31; and Elyria residents Malivanh Phouthavong, 23, and Marlon Charley, 38 were all indicted on one count of illegal use of food stamps.

“Food stamps are designed to assist children and families who need assistance in purchasing healthy meals,” said Cleveland District Agent-in-Charge Greg Croft. “Unfortunately there are some businesses that will allow frivolous purchases and keep the benefits from the children.”

The case stemmed from a citizen complaint and agents were able to determine that ineligible items, including cell phone payments, were purchased with food stamps. Administrative citations were issued at the time of the search warrants for illegal use of food stamps, trafficking in food stamps and theft. After all the criminal proceedings are complete, the administrative case will be presented to the Liquor Control Commission for their consideration. Possible penalties include fines, suspension or revocation of the liquor permit.

Anyone who suspects retailers are participating in food stamp fraud are encouraged to contact the Ohio Investigative Unit by calling #677 on their cell phones.

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The Ohio Investigative Unit agents are plain-clothed fully sworn peace officers. OIU is charged with enforcing the state's liquor laws and is the only state law enforcement agency specifically tasked with investigating food stamp fraud crimes. Agents also investigate tobacco violations.

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