

## ***NEWS RELEASE from***



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## **Deed Fraud Task Force arrests man who forged County official's name to obtain \$80K mortgage**

Over the course of its first two years investigating property scams, the Wayne County Deed Fraud Task Force has arrested and convicted quite a few bold individuals for ripping off homeowners and mortgage companies, but few have been as bold – or as foolish – as D'Clarence Reynolds, according to Task Force officials.

Investigators for the Task Force say Reynolds, 27, who last year had been terminated by the Detroit Police Department in June 2006, allegedly forged the signature of Wayne County Clerk Cathy Garrett on a form that indicated he was still an employee with the city. The letter was dated October 16, 2006, nearly two months after his termination. With that forged document in hand, Reynolds successfully obtained an \$80,000 loan from Long Beach Mortgage to purchase a home located at 7389 Warwick in the city of Detroit.

"It's hard to believe that anyone – particularly a former police officer – would forge the name of a county official and not think it would raise a red flag," said Sheriff Warren Evans. "While it is highly uncommon for a public official's name to be misused in this way, this case clearly demonstrates the extent to which some people will go to steal someone else's property or money."

After the closing, mortgage company official noticed some inconsistencies with the documents and contacted Garrett's office. Garrett confirmed that she had not signed the document and had never heard of Mr. Reynolds. Furthermore, Garrett said, it would not be the Wayne County Clerk who would verify the employment of a city worker.

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Garrett then brought a complaint to the Deed Fraud Task Force, which based on its investigation, obtained a felony arrest warrant on Monday for Reynolds from Prosecutor Worthy's Office. Wayne County Sheriff's Deputies tracked down Reynolds in Highland Park, where he has been working as a part time firefighter for the city's Department of Public Safety. He was arraigned today in 36<sup>th</sup> District Court on charges of Uttering & Publishing, Forgery and False Pretenses Over \$20,000. If convicted, Reynolds faces up to 14 years in prison.

"The vigilance of a mortgage company official who contacted Ms. Garrett exposed this crime. The average person must be diligent and continue to look for anything unusual and report it immediately," said Prosecutor Worthy. "The good news is that it is becoming harder for criminals to commit this type of crime in large part because the public has become more sophisticated in looking for irregularities. Once the crime is uncovered we are successful in prosecuting mortgage and deed fraud defendants."

In October 2005, Register of Deeds Bernard Youngblood, Sheriff Evans and Prosecutor Worthy established this first in the nation Task Force. Currently, four sheriff's deputies and two prosecuting attorneys are joined with members of the Register of Deeds staff and located within the Register's office facilities. These "fraud fighters" direct 100% of their time toward investigating mortgage and deed fraud within the county.

"We are all extremely pleased with the results of the Fraud Task Force's efforts to protect Wayne County residents from scammers," said Bernard J. Youngblood, Wayne County Register of Deeds. "The increasing number of arrests, convictions and prison sentences in document fraud cases are a reflection of the hard work that each of our departments continue to put forth."

During the past two years, the Task Force has initiated more than 350 investigations, made dozens of arrests and maintains a 100% conviction rate. They also offer a fraud detection hotline, (313) 224-5869, which allows people to voice concerns directly. Anyone wishing to verify the ownership of their property in Wayne County can visit [www.waynecountylandrecords.com](http://www.waynecountylandrecords.com)