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Dormont man to stand trial on federal fraud charges

By Jason Cato
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A Dormont businessman set to stand trial next month on a litany of federal fraud charges, including a scheme which siphoned \$1.8 million from senior citizens' bank accounts, was arrested today and accused of continuing his fraudulent ways.

Christopher Fekos, 48, of Dormont, is accused of coercing a widow and her son into taking out loans on his behalf in order to buy Margaritaville, a South Side bar and restaurant. In return, Fekos promised to repay the loan plus 4 percent of sales for 10 years, according to a criminal complaint filed Wednesday.

"The money, however, was used to support Fekos' lavish lifestyle that included expensive automobiles, vacations, meals and homes," U.S. Postal Inspector Ken Wolich stated in an affidavit.

Fekos is charged with bank fraud, mail fraud, wire fraud and bribing a bank employee. He will remain in custody until Friday, when he will appear before U.S. Magistrate Judge Robert C. Mitchell for a detention hearing and arraignment.

The victims, Debra Rose and her son Christopher, provided Fekos with about \$280,000 in bank loans as well as \$35,000 on numerous credit cards, according to court documents.

Debra Rose told federal authorities that she never received any money from Fekos. She also claims several creditors have contacted her about delinquencies in accounts Fekos had promised to pay.

Fekos declined to comment after the hearing. He told Mitchell he didn't feel the charges against him were accurate.

Fekos is already scheduled to stand trial April 9 in Johnstown with co-defendant Joseph Howcroft, of Dormont, on 13 charges of conspiracy, bank fraud, wire fraud, bribing a bank employee and money laundering. The men were indicted by a grand jury in June.

Prosecutors say Fekos orchestrated a massive scam that defrauded numerous lending institutions and banks.

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