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THREE LAWRENCE RESIDENTS CHARGED IN HUMAN TRAFFICKING, PROSTITUTION, FINANCIAL CRIME INVESTIGATION

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo J. Onofri announced today that a two-year investigation into money laundering, tax evasion, prostitution and human trafficking concluded this week with the arrest of three individuals.

Search warrants were executed on Thursday, November 1, at a restaurant, a spa and five residential properties in Lawrence Township and a restaurant in Yardley, Pennsylvania. Search warrants for multiple vehicles were also executed and financial records are being reviewed.

"This is classic case of people being isolated, exploited and trapped in a forced-labor situation. We will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to rescue these vulnerable victims and ensure human traffickers face strict punishment," Prosecutor Onofri said.

He also thanked the public and asked citizens to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity to the local police department. "Residents are our eyes and ears, and continue to be a valuable asset to public safety. They are often the first to recognize something is wrong and alert us so we can investigate."

According to Prosecutor Onofri, an investigation was initiated in September 2016 when the Lawrence Township Police Department received a tip from a resident regarding many

people living in a home on Lakedale Drive in Lawrence and reached out to the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit (ECU).

During the course of multiple surveillances during the investigation, detectives observed numerous different men and women being transported from a residence on Lakedale Drive in Lawrence to restaurants in Lawrence and Yardley, Pennsylvania. Subsequent investigation revealed that Chin Pang Liu was the owner of the house as well as the principal owner of Fusion House on Brunswick Pike, Lawrence, and Golden China Restaurant on Floral Vale Boulevard, Yardley, and that he was transporting workers back and forth. It also revealed that those individuals housed on Lakedale Drive were employed by Liu at his restaurants and that their employment was committed by fraud. Specifically, the employees were being paid below New Jersey state minimum wage requirements, under the table without being taxed, and the full-time employees received no employment benefits. The workers were being transported in vehicles bought and provided by Liu.

During the execution of a search warrant at Liu's primary residence on Mink Court in Lawrence, large sums of packaged U.S. currency were discovered and seized, totaling approximately \$50,000. A review of Liu's 2016 personal tax documents indicated that he reported an income of approximately \$100,000 for that year. Financial documents and cash seized during the execution of the search warrants corroborated that Liu failed to report a significant portion of his income.

Chin Pang Liu, 47, is charged with human trafficking and failure to pay taxes. The prosecutor's office intends to ask for conditions to his release pending future court appearances. The human trafficking charge is a first-degree offense, carrying a sentence of 20 years without parole to life in prison and a fine of up to \$200,000.

The investigation also uncovered that one of Liu's employees, Yonglian Liu, was a frequent patron of Anna Nails and Massage on Brunswick Pike in Lawrence. He was often seen taking cash from the spa to Golden China Restaurant. Detectives were able to establish that Anna Nails and Spa was the site of prostitution.

As a result, Yonglian Liu, 34, and Dong Teng, 45, the owner of the spa, were each charged with promoting prostitution and maintaining a residence as a place of prostitution. They were issued summons complaints and released pending future court proceedings.

The arrests are the result of an investigation lead by Detective Sean Kerins of the Lawrence Township Police Department and Detective David Petelle of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit.

Prosecutor Onofri commended the outstanding investigative work of Detectives Kerins and Petelle, and thanked the following agencies and all of their members who provided support and resources:

- Lawrence Township Police Department
- Mercer County Prosecutor's Office Homicide Task Force, Special Investigations Unit and Special Victims Unit
- Mercer County Tactical Response Team
- Mercer County Sheriff's Office
- New Jersey State Police
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
- U.S. Homeland Security Investigations/Enforcement Removal Operations
- New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness
- New Jersey Division of Taxation
- New Jersey Department of the Treasury
- U.S. Marshals Service NY/NJ Regional Fugitive Task Force
- Bucks County District Attorney's Office

The investigation is ongoing. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Rachel Cook, chief of the Mercer County Prosecutor's Economic Crime Unit.

Despite having been charged, every defendant is presumed innocent until found guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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