

Feds investigate credit card fraud case

By Jill Hockman Staff Writer

Agents with the U.S. Secret Service are investigating whether a woman accused of trying to use a stolen credit card to get a cash advance at a Farmington bank is part of a nationwide credit card scam.

Edith Vitale, 25, who told Farmington police that she lives in Detroit, is charged with stealing and retaining without consent a financial transaction device, according to Officer Dan Potter of the Farmington police.

District Court Judge Fred Harris during a preliminary exam on Friday found enough evidence

FARMINGTON

to send the case to Oakland County Circuit Court.

Vitale is being held in the Oakland County Jail in lieu of a \$100,000 cash bond. If convicted, she faces a maximum sentence of four years in prison and a \$2,000 fine, Potter said.

Special Agent Donald Husted of the U.S. Secret Service's Detroit Field Office said his office is investigating whether Vitale is part of a national credit card scam operation.

A federal charge of unauthorized use of an access device carries a penalty of 10 years in prison and a fine of two times the amount obtained, Husted said.

Farmington police arrested Vitale on Oct. 24. Potter said police had received a call from an employee at the First Nationwide Bank on Orchard Lake Road who said a woman was trying to use a fraudulent credit card.

Potter said the woman was using a credit card that belonged to someone in Indiana. The woman was using a fake driver's license bearing the same name as the credit card, Potter said.

The credit card owner had ordered a new card, which was somehow stolen before it reached

the owner in the mail, Potter said.

Police followed Vitale, who was spotted in a car matching the description given by bank employees, to the parking lot of an apartment complex on Nine Mile Road, Potter said. She was arrested after bank officials identified her as the woman who tried to use the fraudulent card.

Potter said First Nationwide Bank officials had distributed a flyer to employees regarding a woman suspected of using stolen credit cards.

Vitale, who is originally from Nigeria, is in the United States on an expired visa, Potter said. Police confiscated her passport.

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POLICE/FIRE CALLS

Listed below are some of the Farmington-area police incidents, fire calls and court cases reported during the past week.

FIRE DEPARTMENT RUNS

Farmington Hills firefighters made 95 runs during the week of Oct. 30 to Nov. 6 including 57 medical emergencies (60 percent), nine rescues and three fires.

WARDLISM

Two windows were broken at the Merrick Building on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills causing \$200 in damage on Nov. 1.

The front door of a residence at the Independence Green Apartments on Adams in Farmington Hills was kicked in causing \$250 in damage Nov. 4. Police arrested a Hills man, 29.

Four tires were slashed (\$500) on a black 1988 Ford Tempo parked on Castleloch in Farmington Hills Nov. 4-5.

Seven windows at O.E. Dunckel Middle School on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills had BB holes shot through them (\$1,000) between Sept. 1 and Nov. 6.

BREAK-INS

The dash was damaged (\$50) on a beige 1989 Ford Escort parked on Whitlock in Farmington Hills and an AM/FM stereo (\$185) and \$135 in cash were stolen Nov. 2-3.

The driver's door lock was punched (\$150) on a green 1995 Chevy Cavalier parked at H.A. Lumber on Grand River and Eight Mile in Farmington Hills Nov. 6 and a \$425 CD player and five CDs (75) were stolen.

The driver's door lock was punched (\$100) of a white 1995 Chevy Cavalier parked at Botsford Hospital on Grand River in Farmington Hills Nov. 6 and a \$500 AM/FM cassette stereo was stolen.

THEFT

Three wire wheel covers worth \$750 were stolen from a blue 1996 Buick Park Avenue parked at the Kmart store on Orchard Lake in Farmington Hills Nov. 3.

A pair of \$80 gold earrings, \$100 in cash and 60 CDs (\$760) were stolen from a residence at the Mjrlwood Apartments on Conifer in Farmington Hills between Oct. 23 and Nov. 4.

Two wheels were stolen (\$200) from a green 1996 Dodge Caravan parked at Vladimir's on Grand River in Farmington Hills Nov. 4.

Speakers and other equipment (\$304.90) were stolen from a blue 1991 Ford Explorer parked on Tulane in Farmington Hills after the rear hatch window was smashed Nov. 6-8.

Three lap top computers (\$4,500) were stolen from the Wayne State University's Oakland Center on 12 Mile in Farmington Hills Nov. 6.

DRUNKEN DRIVING

Farmington Hills police arrested a Berkley man, 20, for driving a gray 1989 Olds 98 white south on Bunker Hill north of 12 Mile at 4:40 a.m. Nov. 6 while drunk. The car had \$800 in damage from an accident. The driver had a blood alcohol level of .13 percent. In Michigan, a blood alcohol level of .1 is considered too drunk to drive

See POLICE, 6A

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