

Cobb con man gets prison time in Kentucky scam, must return \$500K

A man who ran a fraudulent Cobb County business was sentenced to almost two years in prison by a Kentucky federal judge Monday.

Eric Charlton Claxton, the 30-year-old self-described “real estate whiz kid,” will spend 21 months in prison for three charges of wire fraud, the Courier-Journal in Louisville reported.

He must also pay back \$520,174 to the three apartment communities he swindled between March and November in 2012.

In Claxton’s scam, he claimed he was going to buy the Kentucky apartment complexes and entered into a purchase agreement with them, allowing him to manage and operate the apartments until financing was complete. The ruse, though, was that Claxton didn’t actually have the money to buy the real estate.

And while managing the complexes, he zeroed out the properties’ bank accounts, the newspaper reported.

To make himself seem legitimate, Claxton created a fake letter from an accounting firm along with bogus tax returns and balance sheets.

“I’ve been practicing a long time and have rarely seen such a brazen fraud,” Atlanta lawyer **Richard Robbins** told the newspaper.

Robbins won a \$553,654 default judgment against Claxton in a separate case for two women he bilked in Tennessee.

An investigation showed the things Claxton claimed about his family real estate empire were totally fabricated, Robbins said.

The Cobb address of the Claxton Group listed on the Marietta Better Business Bureau website is that of a home with four bedrooms and three-and-a-half bathrooms just off Wesley Chapel Road in East Cobb.

During the investigation in the apartment fraud case, officials found press releases Claxton had been issuing from the fictitious company, one of which claimed he was being stalked due to his success.

Marietta police, BBB warn of a scam that starts with one question

The newspaper reported Claxton's press release said the company ignored alleged threatening letters from a "deranged individual" but after the threats supposedly became graphic, it paid to install "the best security system on the market for the CEO's hilltop home in the very tony East Cobb portion of Atlanta."

The URL listed on the BBB as the company's website, www.claxtongroup.com, says the domain is for sale.

Cobb court records show that Claxton was also charged in 2012 with child molestation, cruelty to children and influencing a witness.

The first charge in that case was dropped and he entered an Alford plea to the second two, according to the Kentucky newspaper. That type of plea means he disputed his guilt but conceded there was enough evidence to convict him.

In the charges he pleaded to he was sentenced to 10 years of probation and fined \$2,000.