



# NEWS RELEASE

Office of the New York State Welfare Inspector General  
**Catherine Leahy Scott – Acting Welfare Inspector General**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 18, 2018  
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## **EMPLOYEES AT LONG ISLAND GROUP HOME FOR MENTALLY DISABLED STOLE RESIDENTS' FOOD STAMPS FOR FEASTS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FRIENDS**

*Stolen benefits were used for nearly \$8,000 worth of king crab legs, steaks, racks of ribs, baby formula and dozens of cases of Red Bull energy drink, among other items*

LONG ISLAND - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy D. Sini today announced the arrests of and charges against 12 individuals linked to a scheme in which several current and former employees of a Brentwood residential facility for mentally disabled adults stole Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP" or food stamps) welfare benefits belonging to the residents and shared them with their own family and friends. Those SNAP benefits were then used by the employees and others to buy large quantities of king crab legs, steaks, chicken wings, racks of ribs, baby formula and a pallet of Red Bull energy drink cases, among other items, for their own use.

The investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found the 12 stole and/or used the SNAP Electronic Benefits Cards (EBT) belonging to 11 residents at the 50-bed facility on the grounds of Pilgrim State Hospital in Brentwood. The residential facility is one of several run by the nonprofit Federation of Organizations which has numerous locations throughout Long Island and New York City. Some of the stolen residents' EBT cards, which require a pin code to use, were shared among several of the defendants, and the cards were used at local large grocery stores and wholesale clubs between spring of 2015 and the fall of 2017 for bulk purchases of nearly \$8,000 in food products while no significant cooking facilities are available at the group residence itself.

"These charges represent a shamelessly corrupt scheme by a group of defendants willing to steal from New York's most vulnerable citizens to satisfy their own extravagant greed," said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. "This case sends the clear message that my law enforcement partners and I will not tolerate the theft of critical welfare benefits and the abuse of the disabled, and we will pursue and catch those who engage in such criminal activity."

"In this case it is not the size of the financial scheme that makes the crime so disturbing, but rather the depravity of the defendants for their willingness to use their positions to prey upon some of the most vulnerable individuals in our community," **Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy D. Sini** said. "These perpetrators were entrusted to care for these victims and instead robbed them of their most basic resource. I thank Inspector General Scott and the Office of the Welfare Inspector General for their partnership in bringing these individuals to justice."

The individuals charged today as part of an ongoing investigation include:

- Marla Hayes, 31, of Garden City Avenue, Wheatley Heights, former case manager at the residential

facility and currently works for Federation of Organizations at their Creedmoor Center in Queens, was charged with two counts each of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, and one count of Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, all felonies.

- Sasha Quintanilla, 31, of New Hampshire Avenue, Bayshore, a former case manager for the residence, was charged with two counts each of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies.
- Alejandro Khoury, 30, of Voorhis Drive, Brentwood, a former rehabilitative associate at the residential facility and former boyfriend of Quintanilla, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies.
- Alex Coyman, 28, of Woodlawn Avenue, St. James, a former employee of the residential facility, was charged with two counts of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and one count of Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- James Newkirk, 31, of South 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Wyandanch, Huntington, a peer support aide at the residential facility, was charged with three counts each of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- Vipul Shah, 50, of Headline Road, Deer Park, owner of the S & V Convenience Store in Smithtown, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies.
- Candice Collins, 35, of Davidson Street, Wyandanch, was charged with two counts each of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and one count of Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- Stacia Smith, 47, of Parkdale Drive, North Babylon, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- Takemma Dukes, 36, of 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Wyandanch, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- Vanessa Wilson (Also known as Vanessa Oliver), 59, of 23<sup>rd</sup> St., Wyandanch, was charged with two counts each of Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies, and one count of Petit Larceny, a misdemeanor.
- Kareem Clark, 39, of Maple Lane, Medford, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree, Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, and Grand Larceny in the Fourth Degree, felonies.
- Ebony Hicks, 42, of Cherry Street, Central Islip, was charged with Endangering the Welfare of an Incompetent or Physically Disabled Person in the First Degree and Criminal Possession of Stolen Property in the Fourth Degree, felonies.

The defendants were all released pending future court action.

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy D. Sini and his office for their assistance with the arrests and for prosecuting this case.

The defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty in a court of law.

*The New York State Office of the Welfare Inspector General investigates fraud, abuse or illegal acts committed against public assistance programs designed to help those in need. Our office also investigates complaints about the agencies and local social services districts who administer social services programs. Complaints and referrals are kept confidential. We can be reached by calling toll free: 1-800-367-4448, utilizing our online complaint form: <http://www.ig.ny.gov> or sending an email to: [inspector.general@ig.ny.gov](mailto:inspector.general@ig.ny.gov). You also can write to our office at: Office of the Welfare Inspector General, Empire State Plaza, Agency Building 2, 16th Floor Albany, New York 12223*