



NEWS RELEASE

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

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NIAGARA COUNTY WOMAN SENTENCED AND PAYS MORE THAN \$2,200 RESTITUTION FOR WELFARE FRAUD

BUFFALO - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today announced the sentencing of a Niagara County woman on charges she fraudulently received food stamps.

Christine Willett, 45, of Main Street, North Tonawanda, was sentenced today to more than \$2,200 restitution, 50 hours of community service and a one year conditional discharge in Lockport City Court for her December 2016 guilty plea to Offering a False Instrument for Filing in the Second Degree.

The plea and sentencing resulted from an investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott which found that from November 1, 2015, to April 30, 2016, Willett fraudulently received \$2,244 in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (“SNAP” or food stamps) benefits as a result of her failure to accurately report her income. In her November 2015 “Periodic Report” to Niagara County Department of Social Services, Willett failed to report income from her job as a home health aide.

“This defendant deceived and defrauded her county social services agency in order to obtain public benefits to which she was not entitled,” said Inspector General Leahy Scott. “I will continue using the resources of my office to pursue anyone who defrauds the public benefits system.”

Inspector General Leahy Scott thanked the Niagara County Department of Social Services for their assistance with the investigation, the Niagara County Sheriff’s Office for their assistance with the arrest, and the Niagara County District Attorney Caroline A. Wojtaszek and her office for prosecuting this matter.

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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.state.ny.gov> or sending an email to: 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.