



NEWS RELEASE

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

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FORMER EMPLOYEE AT LONG ISLAND GROUP HOME FOR MENTALLY DISABLED CHARGED AS PART OF SCHEME OF EMPLOYEES AND ACQUAINTANCES STEALING RESIDENTS' FOOD STAMPS TO PAY FOR FEASTS FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FRIENDS

LONG ISLAND - New York State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott and Suffolk County District Attorney Timothy D. Sini today announced the arrest of another former employee of a Brentwood residential facility for mentally disabled adults on charges of stealing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP" or food stamps) welfare benefits belonging to the residents and using those benefits to buy groceries for themselves. The arrest is directly related to the 12 others, former employees and their acquaintances, charged last week in connection to the scheme in which the SNAP benefits were used by the facility's 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.

Thomas Oliver, 56, of Charleston, South Carolina, a former rehabilitative associate at the facility, 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. The charges allege Oliver used a resident's stolen benefits card to buy hundreds of dollars in food for his own use, predominantly packaged baby-back ribs.

The investigation by Inspector General Leahy Scott found Oliver and the 12 others 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.

"This defendant represents yet another group residence employee willing to turn his back on the vulnerable individuals in his care to shamelessly satisfy his own greed," said **Inspector General Leahy Scott**. "This arrest makes clear that my law enforcement partners and I will not tolerate thefts from or the abuse of disabled New Yorkers, and we will relentlessly pursue anyone who engages in such criminal activity."

"This arrest is a testament to our commitment to continuing the investigation into the alleged misuse and theft of SNAP benefits by defendants who used their positions of power and trust to prey upon some of the most

vulnerable individuals in our community,” said **District Attorney Sini**. “Once again, I thank Inspector General Leahy Scott and the Office of the Welfare Inspector General for their partnership in bringing these individuals to justice.”

The individuals charged last week as part of the 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 25th 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 23rd 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 23rd 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.

Oliver was released following his arrest and is scheduled to appear in court in August.

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.

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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.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