

## **Task Force Targets Fraudulent Check-Cashing Rings**

Thursday June 17, 2010 11:57 AM

UPDATED: Monday June 21, 2010 2:55 PM



A task force of local, state, and federal law enforcement officers was arresting people accused of cashing bad checks on Thursday, trying to crack down on a crime they said costs everyone money.

Officers have been serving arrest warrants since the early morning, working from a command post set up at Cooper Stadium, 10TV's Cara Connelly reported.

Agents with the Organized Crime Task Force said they have a list of more than 80 people wanted for allegedly cashing bad checks.

Police said the accounts and routing numbers are often stolen off legitimate checks and used to create fraudulent ones.

The check rings involve several layers of people, including those who print the checks and those who cash them, police said.

"A (check) printer comes up with a valid routing number, creates an account number, creates a counterfeit payroll check and then finds individuals who are willing to cash these checks," said Jeff Rossi, with the Ohio Organized Crimes Commission.

The crimes cost consumers money because businesses have to recoup the money they lose.

"So in order to do that they pass it on to the consumer, which is a logical step, which increases prices, it increases our cost as a consumer," said Westerville Police Chief Joe Morbitzer. "Ultimately we are saving money for the consumer."

The people wanted are responsible for more than \$200,000 in counterfeit payroll checks, the attorney general's office said.

By the end of the day police had arrested 15 people, Connelly reported.

Two of the people who ran the check rings were convicted for their roles and are currently in prison, the attorney general's office said.

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# Woman guilty of embezzling \$588,000 from nonprofit

By Kathy Lynn Gray *The Columbus Dispatch* • Friday February 7, 2014 7:49 AM

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Within four months of assuming payroll duty for a Reynoldsburg nonprofit organization, Wendy M. Harper began embezzling.

By the time she was caught 40 months later, she'd slipped \$588,121 into her bank accounts.

The company, meanwhile, was struggling to stay afloat.

Harper, 44, of 909 Radbourne Dr. on the South Side, pleaded guilty yesterday to stealing from Harvest Management Group, which manages 18 properties for disabled or elderly residents.

She was charged with one count of theft from federal-program funds and one count of filing a false federal income-tax return. She could be sentenced to 13 years in prison and fined \$500,000.

Shawn Mincks, a special agent with the Internal Revenue Service, said Harvest Management receives millions of dollars from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to subsidize rents on its properties, which include more than 900 units.

The company had trouble maintaining the units and paying property taxes because of the theft, he said.

Harper worked at the company from August 2008 to August 2012. As payroll supervisor, Mincks said, she gave herself unauthorized pay raises and exorbitant mileage reimbursements.

Investigators found that she would have had to drive 1.2 million miles for the mileage to be legitimate.

Celia Kendall, who became chief executive officer of Harvest in 2012, sat behind Harper in court yesterday.

"It's a very sad day when vulnerable populations like the ones we serve are impacted like this," Kendall said after the hearing.

Company officials felt betrayed by Harper's actions and have struggled to operate in the wake of the lost money, she said.

"But our future is very bright, and it's a whole new day," Kendall said. "We will not be closing down."

According to a plea agreement signed by Harper in May, she didn't include the embezzled funds on her income-tax forms, costing the federal government \$126,019. The agreement requires her to file accurate income-tax returns for 2009 through 2012.

Harper was released on her own recognizance. A sentencing date has not been set.

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**BUSINESS**[Next 10](#) [Innovation Spotlight](#)**3 People Arrested In Alleged Bank Fraud Scheme**

Monday September 23, 2013 5:27 PM

UPDATED: Monday September 23, 2013 5:30 PM

URBANA, Ohio - Urbana police say three people were taken into custody for allegedly committing bank fraud.

It is believed the men are a part of a larger fraud ring that employs the homeless to use fraudulent checks from reputable businesses.

Police say they were notified of a suspicious person inside People's Savings Bank, 618 Scioto Street early Monday morning.

According to authorities, Garye Burnett, 33, was inside and attempting to commit bank fraud.

Burnett was spotted in an Urbana neighborhood yard later in the day and a foot chase began. Burnett was caught in the 100-block of North Jefferson Avenue.

Police also sent out alerts for a white SUV with temporary license plates, and Champaign County sheriff's deputies observed the vehicle in Mutual, Ohio.

Kentay Wilkerson, 20, and Kyle Hogue, 30, were taken into custody in Mutual.

Urbana police said they are now investigating a fraud that occurred at the bank on Sept. 19 and again on Sept. 21.

All three men are being held in Tri-County jail. They await an initial court hearing in Champaign Municipal Court on Tuesday.

Police say once further work is done on the case they expect additional charges to be filed against those in custody.

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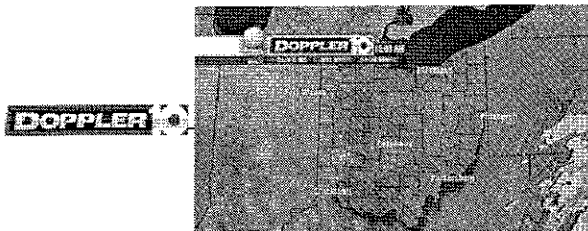
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