



## **Director of Domestic Violence Shelter Pleads Guilty to Stealing Funds**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Tammy Dickinson, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that the director of a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Marshall, Mo., pleaded guilty in federal court today to embezzling from the shelter and to making false statements on federal grant requests.

Deborah L. Wallace, 50, of Marshall, waived her right to a grand jury and pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner to a federal information that charges her with one count of stealing government property and one count of making false claims for reimbursement under a federal grant.

Wallace was the executive director of the Lighthouse Shelter, Inc. By pleading guilty today, Wallace admitted that she embezzled money from Lighthouse, including money obtained from grants funded by the U.S. Department of Justice. Over a five-year period from 2008 through 2013, Wallace used Lighthouse credit cards to pay personal expenses. Wallace also made unauthorized payments on personal credit cards and her personal cell phone from the Lighthouse bank account.

In her position as executive director, Wallace certified that the grant applications submitted to the Missouri Department of Public Safety for federal grants – the Victims of Crime Act and the State Services for Victims Fund – were true and accurate statements in support of the grant applications. Wallace also certified that the monthly invoices made in support of disbursement of the grant monies were true and accurate. Wallace admitted today that she submitted fraudulent monthly invoices. For example, she falsely claimed that employees who actually performed other duties were working in positions funded under the grants.

The government and Wallace do not agree on the amount of the loss from the fraud scheme. If they are unable to agree to a loss figure by the time of Wallace's sentencing hearing, the court will decide the matter by a preponderance of the evidence. Under the terms of today's plea agreement, Wallace must pay restitution to Lighthouse for the total amount of the loss. Wallace also must pay the government a money judgment representing the amount of Lighthouse funds she obtained by fraud or for her own personal benefit as a result of her criminal violation.

Under federal statutes, Wallace is subject to a sentence of up to 15 years in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$500,000. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Paul S. Becker. It was investigated by the FBI and the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General.

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