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News Release

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Former correctional officer sentenced for accepting bribes from inmates' relatives

A former correctional officer at the Federal Medical Center in Rochester was sentenced earlier today in federal court in Minneapolis for accepting approximately \$5,000 in bribes from the relatives of two inmates. United States District Court Judge Patrick J. Schiltz sentenced Cheryl Wheeler, age 53, of Wabasha, to eight months in prison, plus an additional four months of home confinement, on one count of bribery of a public official. Wheeler was charged on August 5, 2010, and pleaded guilty on September 17, 2010. She also will be required to perform 120 hours of community service.

In imposing sentence, Judge Schiltz said, "This case is not about the money. It's about the betrayal of the trust that was placed in Ms. Wheeler. When bad corrections officers abuse their trust, it causes others to distrust and disrespect all corrections officers and makes it much harder for them to do their jobs." He noted that the defendant's conduct in giving cellular telephones to an inmate threatened the security of the institution and the safety of its personnel.

In her plea agreement, Wheeler admitted that from July of 2009 through February of 2010, she demanded and received monetary bribes from the relatives of two inmates in exchange for supplying those inmates with tobacco. She also provided cellular telephones to an inmate.

This case was the result of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General. It was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeffrey Paulsen.

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