

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Southern District of Ohio

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Former bookkeeper of federally funded domestic violence shelter sentenced to prison for misusing shelter funds on personal expenses

CINCINNATI – The former bookkeeper of My Sister's House, a now-shuttered domestic violence shelter in Washington Court House, Ohio, was sentenced in U.S. District Court today to 12 months in prison for crimes related to stealing funds from the shelter.

Jaime Cardinal, 46, of Washington Court House, was arrested in July 2020.

Cardinal spent tens of thousands of dollars intended for the operation of the shelter on personal expenses, including food, a trip to Disney World and Universal Studios for her daughter, and thousands of dollars in purchases from Avon, Thirty-One and iTunes.

Between January 2014 and October 2016, Cardinal and a coconspirator misused debit cards connected to the shelter's bank accounts to make hundreds of personal purchases at restaurants, auctions, craft stores and bowling alleys, among other places – including purchases made when few, if any, victims were living at the shelter.

For example, in March and April 2016, when no victims were in the shelter, Cardinal and the coconspirator charged more than \$6,000 to the shelter's debit cards for food at restaurants and grocery stores, car repair and fuel for personal cars, weight-loss supplements, and other personal expenses.

Due to the thefts, which totaled more than \$50,000, My Sister's House fell behind on payroll and on paying taxes. In November 2016, the shelter's board placed all employees on administrative leave pending further investigation. The domestic violence shelter—the only such shelter in Washington Court House—never reopened.

As part of her conviction, Cardinal will pay \$25,000 in restitution. She was also sentenced to two years of supervised release following her term of imprisonment.

My Sister's House received more than \$10,000 annually in federal grant funds, including grants under the Violence Against Women Act, the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Victims of Crime Act. The grants are intended to be used to pay for salaries and benefits of staff and for shelter operations, including supplies and shelter maintenance.

Kenneth L. Parker, United States Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, and the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General announced the sentence imposed today by U.S. District Judge Matthew W. McFarland. Assistant United States Attorney Julie D. Garcia is representing the United States in this case.

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