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# Grandmother faces prison in embezzlement

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STAMFORD - A 68-year-old grandmother will spend a year in prison for embezzling nearly \$200,000 from a Greenwich company to help her crack-addicted son pay rent and raise his children, attorneys said yesterday.

Cathleen Boyd, of 25 Putnam Green, Apt. H, Greenwich, could have avoided prison had she been able to pay back all or most of the money, attorneys said.

Boyd said she has \$6,000 saved but cannot afford anything close to \$200,000.

She worked as the bookkeeper at Resolute Communications Co. in Greenwich and started adding small amounts of money to her checks in 2000, according to an arrest affidavit.

Boyd, who has no previous record, scammed the company until her bosses discovered the thefts and fired her in 2005, an affidavit shows.

The thefts ruined the company, the prosecutor, State's Attorney David Cohen, said yesterday in state Superior Court. Cohen suggested Boyd was able to take the money without being noticed because the head of the company had cancer.

The firm was in bad shape and would have collapsed anyway, said Boyd, who apologized for the thefts yesterday.

Boyd was trying to help her son survive, she said. He has been addicted to crack for years, and was unable to buy food for his two teenage children, Boyd said after yesterday's hearing.

His apartment was filthy and he could not pay the rent, she said, adding that she was given official custody of the two children Wednesday.

Her attorney, Howard Ehring, asked the judge to spare Boyd jail and sentence her to probation.

"This is a sad, sad situation," Ehring said.

But Boyd pleaded guilty to first-degree larceny in September, and agreed to serve two years in prison unless she paid back the money, records show.

Cohen recommended the two-year sentence yesterday. Judge Robert Devlin settled on a one-year sentence.

"Sometimes, it's rotten to be a judge," Devlin told Boyd. "I take no pleasure in imposing a sentence on you, ma'am."

Devlin gave Boyd until Tuesday to get her affairs in order before she goes to prison.

Boyd's is the latest larceny case that shows the ability to repay can make the difference between going to prison and getting probation.

In August, Lukasz Rydza of Norwalk avoided jail despite confessing to theft of at least \$120,000 from Grade A in the Shippan section of Stamford, records show.

Rydza's family refinanced their house and wrote the supermarket's owner a check for the full amount the day Rydza was sentenced to probation.

A judge gave a better deal to Gregory Madden, a former Fairfield police officer who admitted stealing more than \$100,000 worth of athletic shoes from the New Canaan store where he worked in 2004 and 2005, records show.

Madden's mother refinanced the family home and presented the store owner with a certified check worth \$60,000 last February. Madden is in a special two-year probation program that gives him the chance to have his record erased if he meets various conditions.

Boyd's case is most similar to that of Gina Marie Palazzolo, 30, who spent six months in prison for stealing \$100,000 from Stew Leonard's in Norwalk, where she worked as a cashier.

Palazzolo could not repay company owners, records show, and they wanted her sent to prison.

Boyd will be out of prison within several months with good behavior.

But she worries about her teenage grandchildren, especially since her son, 42, is headed to North Carolina to face outstanding charges there.

"To have to come back here next week and go to jail," Boyd said tearfully, "I don't know what I'm going to do."

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