

Ex-school employee accused of embezzlement

By Samantha Yale/Staff Writer

A former business manager for the Los Olivos School District is facing charges of grand theft by embezzlement and forgery after she allegedly took more than \$50,000 from the district.

Gina Gandall, 43, of Los Alamos was accused Feb. 28 by the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office of four felony counts of grand theft by embezzlement, alleged to have happened between Feb. 1, 2003, and Sept. 30, 2006. She was also accused of one felony count of forgery of a document, alleged to have taken place between Feb. 1, 2003 and Dec. 31, 2006.

In addition, the district attorney's office alleged that the amount of money Gandall embezzled from Los Olivos School District was more than \$50,000.

The investigation was conducted by investigators in the district attorney's office, according to Senior Deputy District Attorney Jerry Lulejian.

Gandall was scheduled to be formally charged Friday in Santa Barbara County Superior Court in Santa Maria, but her arraignment was continued to April 19.

She is free from jail on her own recognizance, Lulejian said.

Lulejian, who is the prosecutor on the case, declined to describe the facts in the case, and said it was standard for the district attorney's office not to comment on ongoing investigations, especially criminal ones.

Gandall's attorney in the matter, Kay Kuns, said Monday that she had no comment at this time on the case.

Laura Cleaves, senior criminal investigator for the Santa Barbara County District Attorney's Office, said that a search warrant was served on Gandall's Los Alamos residence, and another on a bank account. She said that Gandall was the keeper of checkbooks and records for the district, and handled payroll. Cleaves said the forgery charge was due to checks forged with the signature of Los Olivos School District superintendent and principal, Anjanette Winckler.

The missing funds have not been returned to the district, Cleaves said.

"We found out a concern at the school and turned it over to the sheriff's department," Winckler said.

The superintendent and principal said Gandall doesn't work for the Los Olivos School District anymore, but declined to discuss the terms on which she left. She said the employee of a few years hasn't worked for the district this year, and she declined to talk about what kind of employee Gandall had been.

"I can't discuss the facts of the case," she said.

Samantha Yale can be reached at 739-2159 or syale@santamariatimes.com.

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