



Posted on Wed, May. 02, 2007

Judge rejects plea deal, sentences charity embezzler to 15 years

HERALD-LEADER STAFF REPORT

After rejecting a plea agreement that prevented jail time, a judge sentenced a Tennessee woman to 15 years in prison for embezzling nearly \$280,000 in charity proceeds from a Kentucky senior citizens center.

Paula Marie Terrones had pleaded guilty to five counts after being indicted on more than 264 counts involving forgery and theft by unlawful taking. A deal with prosecutors called for a sentence of five years on each of the five counts to be served concurrently and probated for five years or until the stolen money was repaid, according to the Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet.

Todd Circuit Judge Tyler Gill ordered the additional time in prison.

Authorities contended that Terrones, a bookkeeper for the Guthrie Senior Citizens Center in Todd County, deposited checks made out to charitable gaming supply companies to her own bank account. The embezzlement began in July 2003; checks were altered through September 2005 when she quit, according to the Public Protection Department. Terrones was arrested in Tennessee after the indictments were issued last summer.

Terrones is one of several people charged and/or convicted recently on charges of taking money from charities, including their bingo operations.

For instance, a federal jury convicted two Madison County women for skimming proceeds from the bingo operations at Jackpot Charity Bingo in Waco. At the time of their September conviction, Rita Faye Tipton and Gloria Ann Williams, both in their mid-60s, were two of 26 people who had been convicted of stealing money intended for charity since 2003, According to the state Office of Charitable Gaming.