

Auditor Arrests Woman Accused of Stealing from Needy Schoolchildren

JACKSON, Miss. – Today State Auditor Shad White announced Special Agents from his office have arrested Carol Jackson in Sunflower County after she was indicted for fraud. She was issued a \$109,124.59 demand letter upon her arrest. The demand amount includes interest and investigative expenses.

Jackson was the executive director of a nonprofit organization supposedly administering a Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) program meant to provide meals to needy schoolchildren during summer months. She allegedly submitted fraudulent documents to MDE and stole over \$40,000 from the pro-

gram. She purportedly used program funds to write herself over \$20,000 in checks in addition to withdrawing thousands of dollars from an ATM at a local casino and spending nearly \$2,000 on personal travel.

"We will hold the line when someone steals any taxpayer funds, but we are even more motivated when someone steals money intended for children," said Auditor White. "Thank you to the investigators who worked tirelessly on this case."

Jackson surrendered to Special Agents at the Sunflower County Sheriff's office. Bail was set at \$10,000 by the court.

If convicted, Jackson faces

up to 5 years in prison and \$10,000 in fines. All persons arrested by the Mississippi Office of the State Auditor are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law. District Attorney W. Dewayne Richardson's office will prosecute the case.

No surety bond covers Jackson as executive director of a nonprofit organization managing a taxpayer-funded program. Surety bonds are similar to insurance designed to protect taxpayers from corruption. Jackson will remain liable for the full amount of the demand in addition to criminal proceedings.

Suspected fraud or misappropriation can be reported to the Auditor's office online any time by clicking the red button at www.osa.ms.gov or

Louisiana man pleads in MS health care scheme

GULFPORT, Miss. (AP) — A Louisiana man has pleaded guilty in Mississippi in connection with a multi-million dollar health care scheme, the U.S. Attorney's Office in Gulfport said in a news release.

Thomas Wilburn Shoemaker, 57, of Monroe admitted participating in a scheme to defraud health care benefit programs. Prosecutors said Shoemaker acted as a marketer for a pharmacy — World Health Industries Inc. — specializing in com-

via telephone during normal business hours at 1-(800)-321-1275.

pounded medications.

Shoemaker acknowledged allowing the pharmacy to use his insurance to adjust prescription formulas to ensure high reimbursement without regard to how well they worked. The release Thursday said he also admitted recruiting doctors to pro-

Guilty plea in Mississippi health care fraud case

HATTIESBURG, Miss. (AP) — A Mississippi woman has pleaded guilty in a federal health care fraud case, the U.S. Attorney's Office said in a news release.

Joy Beth Harden, 51, of Columbia, pleaded guilty Tuesday to one count of health care fraud involving Medicare and other health benefit programs, said the news release distributed Thursday. Prosecutors said

cure prescriptions for costly compounded medications.

Prosecutors also said Shoemaker admitted to obtaining fraudulent prescriptions using personal information of military acquaintances. He received a total of at least \$672,538 derived directly from the fraud scheme, according to the release.

Shoemaker is scheduled to be sentenced on Nov. 30. He faces up to five years in prison.

Harden submitted fraudulent bills for medical equipment on behalf of her business, which operated as Duracare Home Medical Equipment in the Hattiesburg area.

That resulted in payments to Harden for equipment that was never prescribed to patients and equipment that was never delivered. Sentencing was set for Nov. 23. She faces up to 10 years in prison and a fine of as much as \$250,000.



It's fun to see newcomers to the hunting and fishing sports. Whether it's an adult or youth, both bring a fresh sense of excitement that is contagious. And after a few times in the activity, they consider themselves a part of this special group. This extended family usually calls for new equipment, gear, and all the clothes and accessories that go along with this new-found identity. What's great about this is not only have these individuals found a place to fit in, but whoever introduced them to these sports are equally excited to have them as part of their family.

One of the greatest feelings is to be wanted. Especially when a person has perhaps come from a place where they were not wanted before. As I mention this, I am thinking about the hundreds of thousands of children in America who are in Foster Care. Of those in this care, some are still wanted by their biological parents, but most are not. And not only are most not wanted by their biological parents, but they are also moved many times in their lives from place to place – undoubtedly feeling unwanted. Two of my own adult children have gone through the foster process and because of that, I am the proud poppy of an adopted boy. But my heart breaks for the many children I have met who not only needed to be loved but who also needed

to be wanted – even through their kicks and screams of rebellion, which were only kicks and screams from internal pain. My heart also goes to them because I'm afraid of the picture they might get of God. That he too doesn't want them – at least as they are. And he surely will get rid of them if there is any spark of disobedience, they assume. And yet, that is far from who God is and we must do our part to portray him as he really is – especially to those who have lived in unwanted or unaccepted places.

If you are one of those who have lived your life feeling unwanted or unaccepted, let me offer a small word of encouragement by letting you know that not only does God love you, but he wants you. And not only does he want you, but he will never let you go. Yes, even through your kicks and screams of pain disguised as rebellion. He knows your struggles and understands your doubts. And he still wants you just as you are. Will he change you? Of course. But no more or less than he does any of us who are in the family. This big world is undoubtedly hard and even unfair. But know that God thought so much of you that he didn't want to create this world without you in it, and without you with him forever. You are loved. You are wanted. And what God loves and wants, he keeps. You are home now.

“NOTICE OF A PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING ON THE PROPOSED BUDGET AND PROPOSED TAX LEVIES FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR FOR THE CITY OF LEXINGTON”

The City of Lexington will hold a public hearing on its proposed budget and proposed tax levies for the fiscal year 2022 on Monday August 23, 5:30 p.m., at the City Hall located at 112 Spring Street, Lexington, MS.

The City of Lexington is now operating with projected total budget revenue of \$1,179,222. \$360,000, or 30.53% of such revenue is obtained through Ad Valorem Taxes. For the next fiscal year, the proposed budget has total projected revenue of \$ 1,149,020. Of that amount, 31.33% or \$360,000 is to be financed through a total ad valorem tax levy.

The decision to not increase the ad valorem tax millage rate for the fiscal year 2022 above the current fiscal year's ad valorem tax millage rate means you will not pay more in ad valorem taxes on your home, automobile, tag, utilities, business fixtures and equipment and rental real property, unless the assessed value of your property has increased for the fiscal year 2022.

A millage rate of 52.75 will produce the same amount of revenue from ad valorem taxes as was collected the prior year. The millage rate for the prior year was 52.75.

Any citizen of the City of Lexington is invited to attend this public hearing on the proposed budget and tax levies for the fiscal year 2022 and will be allowed to speak for a reasonable amount of time and offer tangible evidence before any vote is taken.