



Fresno County Sheriff – Coroner's Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff-Coroner

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News Release

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Owner of Fresno Convalescent Hospital Arrested for Stealing Money from the Elderly

On Thursday, July 21st, Fresno County Sheriff's detectives arrested Michael Fellen, 65, of Madera. He has been booked into the Fresno County Jail on felony charges of stealing from the elderly. His bail has been set at \$25,000.

On March 10th, 2016 Fresno County Sheriff's deputies began to assist the California Department of Public Health regarding an investigation into possible elder financial abuse. The crime was reportedly taking place at the Sunnyside Convalescent Hospital located at 2939 S. Peach Ave. in the County of Fresno. A whistle blower made allegations of possible financial abuse to trust account of the residents. The money in the trust account comes from deposits made from various sources such as the resident's pensions and Social Security benefits. Investigators collected bank records and turned them over to a state auditor. The audit found a discrepancy in June of 2015. Thousands of dollars were discovered to have been transferred from the residents' trust account to the Sunnyside Convalescent Hospital's business account.

Sunnyside Convalescent Hospital owner, Michael Fellen admitted to investigators that he took the money to cover extreme debt. He used it to pay vendors, payroll and facility costs, saying he had to pay bills somehow. Fellen did not get permission from the residents prior to taking their money. He also admitted that he had falsified the residents' monthly statements so they would not detect the money was missing. The money in the residents' trust account is not to be used for facility related

expenses. Although Fellen was the administrator of the account, a portion of the money in account belongs to each resident. A total of 57 residents were victimized by the theft, six of whom have since died.

The case was filed with the District Attorney's Office and an arrest warrant was obtained for Fellen. This remains an ongoing investigation by the California Department of Public Health.

Anyone with additional information on Michael Fellen or other cases of elder abuse should call Fresno County Sheriff's Detective Skip Swain at (559) 600-8025 or Crime Stoppers at (559) 498-STOP (7867). You will remain anonymous and may be eligible for a cash reward.

Case # 16-11744