

THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
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Department of Justice

U.S. Attorney's Office

Western District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federal grand jury indicts two for stealing \$536,000 from children's meal program

SHREVEPORT, La. – United States Attorney David C. Joseph announced today that a federal grand jury returned charges against two Shreveport individuals who ran a nonprofit corporation for stealing more than \$536,000 from a program meant to supply meals to children during the summer.

Lynn D. Cawthorne, 51, and Belena C. Turner, 46, both of Shreveport, are charged with one count of conspiracy to commit wire fraud and seven counts of wire fraud. According to the indictment, the Food and Nutrition Service is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which administers the Child Nutrition Programs. The Child Nutrition Programs include the Summer Feeding Service Program (SFSP), which was established to ensure that children in low-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals when school is not in session during the summer.

United Citizens and Neighborhoods (UCAN) is a non-profit corporation that participated as a sponsor in the SFSP. Cawthorne is the president of UCAN, and Turner is the director, representing herself to be its executive director. Cawthorne Catering and Harvest Catering Inc. are businesses that allegedly provided catering services for UCAN. Beginning sometime in early 2011 and continuing until sometime in December 2015, the defendants fraudulently obtained more than \$536,000 from the SFSP by engaging in numerous activities to defraud, included filing claims for reimbursement that greatly inflated the number of eligible meals provided, thus claiming more children were fed at UCAN sites than were actually fed. Also money was transferred to the catering companies and other entities so that the defendants could improperly use funds that were entrusted to UCAN for the SFSP.

The defendants face 20 years in prison, three years of supervised release, restitution and a \$250,000 fine for each count.

The Louisiana State Inspector General, Caddo Parish Sheriff's Office, FBI and the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Office of Inspector General investigated the case. First Assistant U.S. Attorney Alexander C. Van Hook and Assistant U.S. Attorney Tennille M. Gilreath are prosecuting the case.

An indictment is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.
