

Department of Justice

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DELHI MAN SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR SCHEME TO DEFRAUD THE USDA'S SUMMER FOOD SERVICE PROGRAM

BATON ROUGE, LA – Acting United States Attorney Ellison C. Travis announced that U.S. Chief Judge Shelly D. Dick sentenced Corey Roshel Powell, age 43, of Delhi, Louisiana, to 29 months in federal prison following his conviction for a scheme to defraud the USDA's summer food service program. The Court further sentenced Powell to serve three years of supervised release following his term of imprisonment.

According to admissions made as part of his guilty plea, Powell owned and operated The NELLA Foundation (NELLA), a non-profit organization domiciled in Darrow, Louisiana, which served as a sponsor for the SFSP. Over the course of the summers of 2014 and 2015, Powell and his co-defendant, Janie Johnson Smith, inflated the number of meals NELLA purportedly served to low-income children and submitted fraudulent claims for reimbursement based on the inflated numbers. Powell and Smith also falsified program documents to support the false claims for reimbursement. Once the funds were transmitted to NELLA, Powell and Smith used SFSP funds for their own personal expenses such as car and rent payments, or withdrew the funds as cash. Additionally, Powell and Smith ordered food for NELLA's purported operations through lines of credit obtained with food distribution companies, and once reimbursed for these expenses by the Louisiana Department of Education, the two defaulted on the lines of credit and instead converted the funds for their own personal use and financial gain. Over a two year period, NELLA submitted and received approximately \$265,000 in SFSP funds.

The USDA's Summer Food Service Program is a federally-funded child nutrition program that is administered by the Louisiana Department of Education. The SFSP is designed to ensure that children in low-income areas continue to receive nutritious meals during the summer when school is not in session.

Acting U.S. Attorney Travis stated, "The conviction and sentence of Mr. Powell reaffirms our commitment to protect government programs intended for those who truly need assistance. I want to thank our prosecutor, the FBI, and the Louisiana Office of Inspector General for their work on this case."

"Today's sentencing sends a clear message that individuals like Mr. Corey Roshel Powell, who brazenly steal from children in need, will be held accountable. Mr. Powell, out of personal greed, committed fraud against USDA Summer Foods Service Program which is designed to provide children in low-income areas nutritious meals during the summer when school is not in session," said FBI New Orleans Special Agent in Charge Douglas A. Williams, Jr. "We thank our

partners at the United States Attorney's Office Middle District of Louisiana and the Louisiana Office of Inspector General for their strong partnership and unrelenting pursuit of justice."

Louisiana Inspector General Stephen Street commented, "The federal prison sentence imposed upon Mr. Powell today is entirely appropriate in light of his brazen theft of over a quarter million dollars intended to feed hungry children. We will never tolerate such callous disregard for the welfare of children, and today's sentence hopefully sends that message." Street added, "I want to thank acting United States Attorney Ellison Travis and his staff for their work on this prosecution, as well as our partners at the FBI."

This matter is being investigated by the Baton Rouge Resident Agency of the Federal Bureau of Investigations and the Louisiana Office of Inspector General and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Kristen Craig.

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