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PRESS RELEASE

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FORMER EAST HAVEN HOUSING AUTHORITY DIRECTOR ADMITS ROLE IN \$400,000 HUD PROGRAM THEFT SCHEMES

Nora R. Dannehy, Acting United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut, announced CASSANDRA ASHE, 37, of North Haven, pleaded guilty today before United States Magistrate Judge Donna F. Martinez in Hartford to one count of conspiracy to commit theft from a program receiving federal funds. The charge relates to ASHE's participation in schemes to steal funds from the East Haven Housing Authority and the New London Housing Authority.

According to documents filed with the Court and statements made in court, in approximately July 2003, ASHE became the Section 8 Coordinator for the New London Housing Authority ("NLHA"). Jonathan Ashe, CASSANDRA ASHE's husband, was employed as a maintenance mechanic for the NLHA. From approximately August 2003 to September 2005, CASSANDRA ASHE and Jonathan Ashe recruited and established an individual to serve as a nominee landlord to receive U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 rent subsidy checks through the NLHA. The HUD program exists to assist qualifying low-income individuals in obtaining rental housing on the private market. As part of the conspiracy, CASSANDRA ASHE caused approximately 47 Section 8 landlord checks made payable to the nominee landlord to be deposited into a bank account in the nominee landlord's name. CASSANDRA ASHE and her husband then withdrew money from that account by ATM, spending some of the cash and depositing some of the cash into their personal bank accounts. The total amount of the NLHA Section 8 checks generated as a result of this scheme was approximately \$204,591.

In approximately August 2005, CASSANDRA ASHE became the Executive Director of the East Haven Housing Authority ("EHHA"). From approximately May 2007 to April 28, 2008, ASHE and her husband conspired to steal Section 8 money from the EHHA bank account by making repeated ATM withdrawals, and then converted the money for their own personal use. The total amount of money stolen from the EHHA as a result of this scheme was approximately \$192,600.

CASSANDRA ASHE is scheduled to be sentenced by Chief United States District Judge Robert N. Chatigny on May 28, 2009, at which time she faces a maximum term of imprisonment of five years and a fine of up to \$250,000.

On February 26, 2009, Jonathan Ashe pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to commit theft from a program receiving federal funds. He awaits sentencing.

This matter was investigated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Inspector General, with the assistance of the United States Postal Inspection Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Susan Wines.

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