



The United States Department of Justice
United States Attorney's Office
Western District of Louisiana

For Immediate Release
April 20, 2012

www.justice.gov/usao/law

Stephanie A. Finley
United States Attorney
(337) 262-6618
mona.hardwick@usdoj.gov

**LAKE CHARLES MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO STEALING
\$1 MILLION IN FOOD STAMP BENEFITS**

Lafayette, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that Vincent Edward DaPrince, a/k/a Vincent Briggs, pleaded guilty yesterday afternoon to one count of Food Stamp Fraud and one count of Wire Fraud in federal court, before U. S. District Judge Richard T. Haik, in connection with the theft of over \$1 million in food stamp benefits.

DaPrince was authorized to participate as a retailer in the Department of Agriculture Food Stamp Program on June 23, 2008, and began operating a mobile food service business, Da Store/Dr. Restaurant, in the Lake Charles area. The investigation revealed that from January 1, 2009 through December 16, 2010, recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program, would approach DaPrince's mobile convenience store in order to "sell" their SNAP benefits to DaPrince. The investigation revealed that DaPrince would swipe the SNAP recipients' Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, and then provide the recipients with a discounted portion of the cash proceeds, with the full amount subsequently being deposited into DaPrince's bank account. Through this process, DaPrince caused more than \$1,000,000 in U.S. Department of Agriculture funds to be deposited into his account.

Agents seized \$343,511.65 in U.S. currency from accounts associated with DaPrince's scheme to defraud. Additionally, agents seized a 1998 Chevrolet van used in the mobile food service business, a 2006 Cherokee travel trailer purchased with funds associated with the scheme, and \$2,295 located in the 1998 Chevrolet van.

DaPrince faces a maximum term of five years in prison for the Food Stamp Fraud violation, and a maximum term of 20 years in prison for the Wire Fraud violation. Sentencing in this matter will be set at a later date.

U.S. Attorney Finley stated, "This case centered in greed. Mr. DaPrince's scheme was designed to circumvent a program designed to assist those in need. His actions hurt the program and ultimately the taxpayers. Our office will continue to vigorously prosecute those who think they can cheat the system and steal from federal programs."

The investigation was led by Special Agent Kevin Bodden of the U. S. Secret Service, Special Agent Michael Clutter of the Office of Inspector General for the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Investigator Rhonda Brown of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services. The Lake Charles Police Department also participated in this investigation. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorneys Daniel J. McCoy and Myers P. Namie.

#