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TAX PREPARER SENTENCED TO PRISON

Tax Preparer to Serve 36 Months for Filing False Tax Returns

Shreveport, La.: Sharay K. Johnson, 41, of Shreveport, La., was sentenced to 36 months in a federal prison, United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley. Johnson pleaded guilty in April to aiding and assisting in the preparation or presentation of a fraudulent tax return. Thursday's sentence was imposed by United States District Judge S. Maurice Hicks, Jr.

Johnson, an office manager at Jackson Hewitt Tax Service in Shreveport, prepared false Income Tax Returns in 2003, which contained false and/or inflated Form W-2 income, false dependents, false Schedule A itemized deductions, false deductions, false education credits, false qualified retirement savings contribution credits, and false student loan interest deductions. She filed the tax returns on behalf of taxpayers who had no knowledge of her actions or the false statements contained on the tax returns. The refunds issued by the IRS were transferred to cash cards through a Jackson Hewitt program, and Johnson obtained the cash cards and negotiated them for her own use.

In addition, Johnson's own 2002 tax return contained a false W-2 and, consequently, reported fictitious wages and federal tax withholding.

Johnson has a very lengthy criminal history, including arrests and convictions relating to fraud. In September of 2003, Johnson was sentenced to five years for felony theft bank fraud. She was released in January of 2006.

Stephanie A. Finley, United States Attorney, stated: "Violations of our tax laws are a serious matter. This sentence should send a message to those who might consider preparing false tax returns that there are criminal consequences of doing so."

Michael J. De Palma, Special Agent in Charge of Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation, stated: "We are pleased with today's announcement. The tax system is built on the premise that taxpayers file accurate and timely tax returns. Willfully aiding or assisting in the preparing of false tax returns is a serious crime, punishable under Federal law. To ensure confidence

in our tax system, Special Agents of IRS Criminal Investigation are committed to the aggressive pursuit and prosecution of individuals who intentionally violate the nation's tax laws."

The case was investigated by Special Agent Jude Armand, Internal Revenue Service - Criminal Investigation, Shreveport Office, and is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Robin S. McCoy.

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