



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

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**LAKE CHARLES MAN SENTENCED FOR STEALING
\$1 MILLION IN FOOD STAMP BENEFITS**

Defendant ordered to pay \$1,289,513.87 in restitution

LAFAYETTE, La.: United States Attorney Stephanie A. Finley announced today that Vincent Edward DaPrince, a/k/a Vincent Briggs, 46, of Lake Charles, La., was sentenced to 51 months in prison per count, to run concurrent, and three years of supervised release per count, on charges of Food Stamp Fraud and Wire Fraud. The sentence was handed down by U.S. District Judge Richard T. Haik in federal court in Lafayette, in connection with the theft of over \$1 million in food stamp benefits. Judge Haik ordered the defendant to serve 50 hours of community service for the first 12 months of supervised release and to pay \$1,289,513.87 in restitution to the United States Department of Agriculture. DaPrince pled guilty on April 19, 2012, to one count of Food Stamp Fraud and one count of Wire Fraud.

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 from a van, 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. DaPrince would swipe the SNAP recipients' Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards, and then would provide the recipients with 60% of the cash proceeds. The defendant would then deposit the full amount through wire transfers into his bank account. The investigation revealed that DaPrince caused more than \$1,000,000 in U.S. Department of Agriculture funds to be deposited. During the investigation, the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Agriculture engaged in 11 undercover transactions at DaStore/Dr. Restaurant, during which DaPrince used electronic transactions to acquire money from SNAP EBT "Louisiana Purchase" cards in exchange for cash.

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. On August 15, 2012, U.S. District Judge Richard T. Haik signed a Final Order of Forfeiture, ordering this property to be forfeited to the United States as proceeds obtained directly or indirectly as a result of the defendant's violations, and property used or intended to be used to commit or facilitate the defendant's violations.

U.S. Attorney Finley stated, "This case was centered in greed. Mr. DaPrince's scheme was devised to circumvent a program designed to assist those in need. His actions hurt the program, the community 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 Judge got it right when he said that the public needs to be protected from this defendant."

The investigation was led by Special Agent Kevin Boddien 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. Also participating in the investigation were the U.S. Department of Agriculture Southwest Compliance Center, the Fraud and Recovery Section of the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of Investigations, and Detective Timothy Pruitt of the Lake Charles Police Department. The case was prosecuted by Assistant U. S. Attorneys Daniel J. McCoy and Myers P. Namie.

If you suspect anyone of food stamp fraud, please contact the USDA-OIG at 1-800-424-9121.

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