



CHESTER COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Valley Township Employee Embezzles Over \$250,000  
From Township, Claims Shopping Addiction**

Chester County District Attorney Tom Hogan announced the arrest of defendant Donna Groff for stealing over \$250,000 from her employer, Valley Township in Chester County, Pennsylvania. The defendant spent most of the money buying clothes, jewelry, shoes, and other items online, claiming that she had a “shopping addiction.” The defendant has been charged with felony theft and related offenses.

The defendant is 70 years old. She resides in Downingtown, Pennsylvania.

District Attorney Hogan stated, “Whether you are a business or a government agency, you are vulnerable to fraud. You must have strong oversight and robust systems in place to prevent theft. Valley Township was victimized by this trusted employee, acting merely to amuse herself, and now the taxpayers will foot the bill.”

The facts alleged in the criminal complaint are as follows:<sup>1</sup>

The defendant was a receptionist and secretary for Valley Township, Chester County, Pennsylvania. The defendant had worked for the township for

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<sup>1</sup> A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.

approximately 10 years. She was trusted and well-liked. The defendant's duties included handling cash payments by citizens for their water, sewer, and trash bills.

In December of 2017, another Valley Township employee was reconciling the cash payments for water, sewer, and trash bills with the township's bank accounts. This other employee discovered large discrepancies for the year, with incoming cash never making it to the township bank accounts and fraudulent bank deposit slips.

The Chester County Detectives were called to investigate. Based on an extensive review of records, interviews, and other evidence, the Detectives discovered that the defendant had been systematically embezzling from the township for at least four years.

The defendant stole cash payments for water, sewer, and trash bills. She simply put the cash into her purse and walked out with it at the end of the day. She fabricated fraudulent bank deposit slips and altered bookkeeping records to cover up the crime.

The defendant stole a total of \$264,577.87 from Valley Township. She initially used the money to pay for medical and dental bills. However, she claimed a "shopping addiction" and spent the majority of the money in hundreds of transactions with QVC and other shopping outlets. She used the stolen money to buy designer clothes, jewelry, shoes, makeup, decorations for her home, and other items.

The defendant was fired by Valley Township when the thefts were discovered. She has been arrested for felony theft, tampering with records, unlawful use of a computer, and other crimes. Bail was set at \$100,000 unsecured.

District Attorney Hogan added, "This investigation is ongoing. Valley Township needs to do a comprehensive audit of the township's finances to determine if there are any other problems or systemic weaknesses."

This case was investigated by the Chester County Detectives. Anybody with any further information should contact Detective Keith Cowdright at (610) 344-6866. The assigned prosecutor is Alex Gosfield.

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Approved for release:

Thomas P. Hogan