

Welfare fraud, perjury charges alleged; Loaves & Fishes manager faces 13 counts

By Jim Schultz

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Felony welfare fraud and perjury charges have been filed against the operations manager of Redding Loaves & Fishes, a Christian ministry that feeds homeless people in Shasta County.

Pearle Florence May, 51, of Redding, is charged with one felony count of aid by misrepresentation and 12 counts of perjury under oath, all felonies, according to the criminal complaint filed in late February in Shasta County Superior Court.

May, who did not return a telephone message left Friday at Loaves & Fishes, is scheduled to be arraigned April 27.

It's alleged in the criminal complaint that May, who received cash aid and food stamps, was paid "under the table" for yard work and other similar chores he performed for a woman identified as Sharon Kessler from January 2007 to December 2010.

May allegedly failed to report that income to his eligibility worker, which totaled \$7,719, according to a report by Shasta County district attorney's office investigator Diana L. Hawkins.

She said it was determined that May worked about nine hours a week and was paid \$10 per hour, adding that the unreported income affected May's eligibility to receive welfare benefits from May 1, 2008, through April 30, 2010.

In her report, Hawkins said she interviewed May early last year to ask him why he did not report the income.

"May stated that he had been told several years ago that if he didn't make over a certain amount of money it wouldn't necessarily affect his benefits," Hawkins wrote.

According to electronic court records, a jail booking notification letter was sent to May on Feb. 27 requiring him to respond by March 23.

Electronic court records said May was released on his own recognizance on March 20 with an order to appear in court on April 27 for arraignment.