



## Press Release

City of Redondo Beach  
Police Department

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Date February 26, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

**Subject :** Suspects in youth football embezzlement cases arrested

**Contact :** **This press release was prepared by Lt Paul Wrightsman  
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On February 26, 2009, The Redondo Beach Police Department arrested two former officials of the non-profit Redondo Beach Youth Football and Cheer for the alleged embezzlement of funds.

Patricia Cotton, the former President and Alesia Fleming, the former Treasurer, were arrested and booked at the Redondo Beach jail. Officers also arrested a third person, Michael Sweet, for the alleged embezzlement of funds from the Pacific Coast Conference, Inc., the parent organization of the Redondo Beach Youth Football and Cheer.

The arrests of Patricia Cotton, a 63 year old resident of Buena Park, and Alesia Fleming, a 42 year old resident of Palmdale, were a result of an extensive two year investigation of allegations of embezzlement of cash proceeds from concession sales at football games. Parents involved with the Redondo Beach Youth Football and Cheer organization alleged that Cotton and Fleming systematically stole money from the organization during a period of several years. Redondo Beach investigators worked on the case continuously from the latter months of 2006 through 2008. The case required hundreds of hours of investigation including the interviews of numerous parents and board members, the service of seven search warrants and court orders, and the review of documents by multiple forensic accountants.

Officers served search warrants at the homes of the suspects and at several banks in 2006 and 2007. Investigators and accountants reviewed the data and prepared a case for presentation to the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office for prosecution. In August 2007, the District Attorney's Office agreed to file charges on one of the two suspects, but in order to consider both suspects, it requested more information and comparative analysis of their independent activities. The police department used the services of three accountants to assist the investigation of the numerous records and financial transactions. Investigators served additional search warrants to banks in August

2008 and requested additional information from the Redondo Beach Youth Football and Cheer to accomplish these requests. Investigative efforts were affected by changes in the organization's board of directors and additional allegations of theft and embezzlement of a new member of the board of directors.

Patricia Cotton and Alesia Fleming were arrested for their warrants for arrest and booked at the Redondo Beach jail for charges of embezzlement. Cotton's bail is set at \$20,000, and Fleming's bail is \$1,000,000.

In late December, 2008, the Redondo Beach Police Department received a complaint of an alleged theft of funds from Pacific Coast Conference, Inc. (PCC). The Pacific Coast Conference is the parent regional organization of the Redondo Beach Youth Football and Cheer. The Pacific Coast Conference (PCC) is the governing body of seventeen youth football associations within the Southern California area. The complaint alleged the theft of approximately \$59,000 from the PCC by the PCC President, Michael Sweet. The funds were allegedly taken over a short period of time by one person, Sweet. Due to the PCC Board's diligence in record keeping and the nature of the funds, the investigation was relatively short. Michael Sweet, a 40 old resident of Lakewood, was arrested on a warrant for alleged charges of embezzlement. Sweet's bail is set at \$59,000.

The Redondo Beach Police Department encourages the leadership and the general membership of any local non-profit organization to review their revenue collection and expenditure processes frequently. Participants should insist on specific handling procedures that include multiple persons validating cash transactions and the independent review and audits of cash and check revenues and expenditures. Organizations should enforce policies for the responsible appointment and retention of volunteer board members. Charitable organizations can be very susceptible to malfeasance because of the reliance on voluntary participation without monetary compensation or reward. All organizations should provide for some background process. With youth organizations, background checks, fingerprinting procedures and retention procedures for board members, snack bar workers and other volunteers are equally important as coaches and others who work directly with the children.

The Redondo Beach Police Department is available to provide community education and information exchange forums regarding ways to prevent fraud and theft.