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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Former Business Manager Sentenced to 15 Years in Prison for Stealing Millions from Elderly Residents at Senior Living Facility

Diane Dancer ordered to pay over \$1.8 million in restitution following plea in major theft case.

DALLAS – Dallas County Criminal District Attorney John Creuzot announced today that Diane Dancer, 57, the former business manager of the Autumn Leaves senior living facility near White Rock Lake in Dallas, has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for stealing more than \$1.8 million from elderly residents over the course of seven years. Dancer was ordered to pay \$1,817,822.97 in restitution to the victims along with the prison sentence. She pleaded guilty to a charge of theft exceeding \$300,000.

“This case is a stark reminder of how important it is to protect our most vulnerable residents from those who would exploit their trust. We take crimes targeting seniors very seriously and my office will prosecute offenders to the fullest extent of the law,” said DA John Creuzot.

Dancer orchestrated a scam in which she instructed 102 residents, many of whom suffered from dementia, to redirect rent payments to an LLC she controlled. Investigators determined that she stole between \$1.8 million and \$2.8 million before her arrest on December 13, 2024.

The sprawling scheme unraveled in early 2024 when volunteers and family members at Autumn Leaves noticed discrepancies in resident rent checks and bank statements. Their findings prompted internal audits, a forensic review, and a referral to the Dallas Police Department, which confirmed Dancer’s fraudulent activities.

At the plea hearing, prosecutors Alicia Patterson and Steve Fawcett presented extensive testimony. Family members of the affected residents, employees of Autumn Leaves, and representatives of the facility recounted the emotional, financial, and trust-breaking impact of the fraud. Many described Dancer as preying on vulnerable tenants, some relying on Social Security stipends, and manipulating them into making duplicate rent payments.

“Diane Dancer used her position of authority at Autumn Leaves to exploit elderly residents and embezzle at least \$1.8 million,” said Lead Prosecutor and Chief of the Elder Abuse Unit, Alicia Patterson. “She preyed upon some of the most vulnerable victims in our community- seniors who worked their entire lives so that they could be financially secure in their golden years. Her greed cost the residents of Autumn Leaves their trust in others, created an enormous financial burden for the company, and earned the defendant 15 years in prison.”

Thank you to DA’s Office Investigator Hoyt Hoffman for his work on the case and to DA’s Office Financial Analyst DeAnna Debenport, whose forensic work revealed the full scale of the embezzlement.

Autumn Leaves responded swiftly upon realization of the fraud, cooperating with authorities, and confirming that no resident accounts suffered lasting losses, as funds were recovered through insurance. They have since implemented stronger oversight in its business office, ensuring transparency and accuracy in billing.

Diane Dancer will begin serving her sentence within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Restitution efforts are underway to return stolen funds to the victims and their families.

Press release written by Intern Sophia Wilson, Dallas County District Attorney’s Office.