



Press Release

Contact: Jerry Knight, ADA
Phone: (256) 351-4610

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LAURA HARRIS PHILLIPS, FORMER DIRECTOR OF THE CARNEGIE VISUAL ARTS CENTER, PLEADS GUILTY

DECATUR, AL - Laura Harris Phillips, former director of the Carnegie Visual Arts Center, pleads guilty on May 7, 2012 in the Circuit Court of Morgan County to two felony cases of first degree theft. One case involved her embezzlement of approximately \$98,000 from the Carnegie Center and the other involved her embezzlement of approximately \$ 41,000 from the Alabama Museum Association for which Ms. Phillips served as treasurer.

Ms. Phillips was sentenced to two fifteen-year prison sentences under the provisions of the Alabama split-sentence act. She will be required to spend six months in the Morgan County Jail and will be placed upon supervised probation for the remainder of the sentences. As a condition to her probation, Ms. Phillips is ordered to make restitution in the amount of \$140,636.94. District Judge Brent Craig was assigned the case for disposition since the three circuit judges each recused themselves due to a court employee's being a Carnegie director. Assistant District Attorney Jerry Knight represented the State in the prosecution of the cases. Knight said that several factors including Ms. Phillips' significant health problems and the amount of restitution ordered were considered in the negotiations which culminated in the guilty plea. A negotiated plea was the only way that the prosecution and the victims could be 100% certain that a restitution plan which maximizes the victims' recovery of stolen could be implemented. Both victims were consulted and agreed to the terms of the plea.

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