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Couple ordered to repay \$5.5M

The Clarksville pair had been accused of fraud involving a commodity pool

Kenya Anderson
Clarksville Leaf-Chronicle
USA TODAY NETWORK – TENNESSEE

A couple of Clarksville Realtors must pay more than \$5 million in restitution for fraud.

The Commodity Futures Trading Commission announced by news release Sept. 25 that Michael Griffis and Amanda Griffis must pay more than \$5.5 million for fraud involving a commodity pool.

The case stems from a 2023 com-

plaint filed in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee by the Commodity Futures Trading Commission.

According to court documents, Michael and Amanda Griffis solicited funds using their real estate connections, including clients, for a fraudulent commodity pool called “Blessings Thru Crypto.”

The two convinced at least 145 people to contribute more than \$6.5 million to

fund what would be used to trade commodity futures on the Apex Trading Platform with guidance from an individual known only as “Coach Wendy,” the news release said.

The two told participants that the funds would be safe and under their control, that they could expect high gains and that the Griffises would pool the funds to trade “crypto futures.”

See RESTITUTION, Page 8A

Teachers paying out of pocket for supplies



During the 2024-25 school year, teachers spent, on average, \$884 of their own money on cleaning supplies, prizes, snacks, decorations, books, pens, paper, hand sanitizer and more, according to My eLearning World. GETTY IMAGES

Budget cuts, inflation making it harder to meet students’ needs

Madeline Mitchell, Carlie Procell, Bethany Rodgers, Jennifer Cortez and Ramon Padilla
USA TODAY

Shanna Danielson, a music teacher at Bermudian Springs Middle School near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, admits she spent a “stupid amount” of her own money on artificial plants to transform her cinderblock-walled classroom into a cozy jungle. Her son donated many of the stuffed animals that peek through the leaves at practicing students. ● She also loves buying props that add pizzazz to band performances, including a penguin cutout that stood onstage as students performed “Penguin Promenade” during the 2024-25 school year. ● “I’m ashamed to admit I spent like \$50,” she said. “But you should have seen the joy on their faces.”

See TEACHERS, Page 7A



History teacher Perla Penalber spends an estimated \$1,800 out of pocket for classroom basics, club expenses and items to make her room more welcoming.
PROVIDED BY PERLA PENALBER

Nutrition education programs ending

Nearly 2M Americans used services in 2022

Leah Douglas and Nathan Frandino
REUTERS

SAN FRANCISCO – On a warm September day in the courtyard of a San Francisco senior living community, a dozen residents shake their hips and throw their hands in the air to the beat of, fittingly, Earth, Wind & Fire’s “September.”

Their hourlong dance class is hosted by Leah’s Pantry, a nonprofit that has run nutrition and health programs around the city since 2006. For Keng-soi Chou Lei, a 72-year-old retiree who came to the United States from Macau in 1995, attending the weekly class has taught her that “exercise makes you healthier, more relaxed and happier overall,” she said in Cantonese through an interpreter.

The organization’s class schedule will soon shrink as Leah’s Pantry faces a 90% funding loss from federal cuts passed in July as part of President Donald Trump’s tax-cut and spending bill.

Schools, food banks and other organizations are rushing to wind down nutrition and health programming once funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education, known as SNAP-Ed, according to eight state officials and nonprofit organizations.

The program was eliminated by Trump’s spending bill, effective Sept. 30.

The cuts represent the first wave of reductions from the bill to federal nutrition programs, which also hiked work requirements for aid recipients and will eventually force significant nutrition spending onto states.

The USDA did not respond to a request for comment.

Since 1992, the USDA has spent more than \$9 billion on SNAP-Ed, agency data shows. Land-grant universities and public health departments typically funnel the federal dollars to organizations serving low-income communities with programs like cooking classes and school gardens.

See CUTS, Page 8A

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Volume 137 | No. 231
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