



2/6/24 Media Release

**Two Suspects Arrested for Financial Elder Abuse,
Conspiracy to Commit Crime, and Forgery**

Grass Valley, CA – Two suspects, 29-year-old Kaylah Okuma of Grass Valley and 44-year-old Wende Hertling of Pilot Hill, were arrested on Feb. 2, 2024, in the 15,000 block of Tippy Way in Grass Valley (Alta Sierra), where they worked as caretakers. Charges for both suspects include financial elder abuse, conspiracy to commit crime, and forgery against a disabled senior husband and wife, who are wheelchair-bound and require 24-hour caregiving assistance.

The Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) was contacted initially on Feb. 1 on suspicions of elder abuse from an anonymous tipster. Deputies responded to the residence on Tippy Way the same day and investigated the allegations. Early evidence suggested elder abuse crimes had been committed.

On the morning of Feb. 2, deputies of NCSO and its Special Investigations Unit returned to the residence for follow-up investigative work. Present at the residence for work were both Okuma and Hertling. It was determined Okuma had stolen at least \$15,000 and Hertling at least \$20,000—over \$35,000 combined over the course of the last approximate four months.

“The level of abuse in this case is upsetting,” said Lieutenant Russell Greene. “This husband and wife require around the clock care and depend on caregivers to help them live comfortably. Instead of comfort and care, exploitation and financial thievery occurred.”

Okuma and Hertling were both booked into Wayne Brown Correctional Facility. The investigation remains ongoing.

To report suspected elder abuse, call the Regional Dispatch Center at (530) 265-7880. If an emergency, call 911.

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