



Justin P. Wilson, Comptroller

February 21, 2018

Former Hardeman County Schools Teacher Pleads Guilty to Theft

An investigation by the Tennessee Comptroller's Office has resulted in Erin Piefer, a former fifth-grade teacher at Toone Elementary School in Hardeman County, pleading guilty to theft.

Piefer also served as the sponsor of Toone's Junior Beta Club, which promotes the ideals of academic achievement, leadership, and service to selected 4th-8th grade students. The Comptroller's Office began its investigation after school officials reported possible missing funds related to the Junior Beta Club.

During the period August 2016 through April 2017, Piefer stole at least \$2,125 from the Club. Piefer failed to deposit money that was collected by students during a candy fundraiser, and she kept money that she collected from students and parents that was intended to offset the cost of attending the National Beta Club convention in Nashville.

In April 2017, school officials confronted Piefer about the shortage and she returned \$840 to the school. Piefer later admitted to Comptroller investigators that she kept and used Junior Beta Club money to pay for personal expenses, including past-due house payments. Piefer submitted her resignation on August 25, 2017.

On February 16, 2018, Erin Piefer pled guilty to the theft over \$1,000.

"It's important that schools include some basic checks and balances around the fundraising process," said Comptroller Justin P. Wilson. "For example, schools must obtain a fundraiser summary report and have someone not involved with collecting the money perform a profit analysis."

To view the investigation online, go to: <http://www.comptroller.tn.gov/ia/>

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