



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ST. JOSEPH WOMAN SENTENCED FOR MAIL FRAUD, CLAIMING DEAD MOTHER'S SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a St. Joseph, Mo., woman was sentenced today for mail fraud and forging her dead mother's signature to cash 93 Social Security checks worth \$50,505.

Barbara K. O'Dell, 48, was sentenced this afternoon by U.S. District Judge Gary A. Fenner to five years of probation, including six months of home confinement. **O'Dell** also was ordered to pay full restitution in the amount of \$50,505 to the Social Security Administration in payments of \$1,403 per month. Restitution must be paid within six months before the end of **O'Dell's** probationary period.

O'Dell pleaded guilty on Sept. 11, 2002, to federal charges of mail fraud. In the plea agreement, **O'Dell** also admitted that at the time of her mother's death in 1993, she failed to inform the Social Security Administration of that fact. Instead, **O'Dell**, who was living with her mother at 2607 S. 27th Terrace in St. Joseph, forged her mother's signature on 93 monthly checks. She then cashed the checks and used the proceeds for personal purposes. In all, the defendant misappropriated 93 checks worth \$50,505.

"**O'Dell** devised and executed a scheme to defraud the United States of money," Graves said. "She used her mother's death as a means of carrying out that plan."

O'Dell fraudulently received the Social Security checks from July 2, 1993 until March 2, 2001. Prior to her mother's death, **O'Dell's** mother was entitled to monthly Social Security payments of \$606. Her mother, Pauline Belcher, died in June, 1993.

This case was prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Kenneth E. Weinfurt. It was investigated by the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow