

SNEPT Raided Monday, Two Key Employees Held

The Southern Nevada Employment and Training Program, formerly known as CETA, was raided by local and federal authorities early Monday morning and two key employees were arrested in connection with an alleged kickback scheme to steal federal funds intended for the poor.

Those arrested were identified as Kenneth Woods, a Michigan attorney of 1943 Sandhill Road and Bryant Williams, 5673 Pineview Place.

Woods and Williams, who were named in a federal grand jury indictment returned last Thursday, are charged with conspiracy, bribery, theft of government funds, mail fraud and making false statements to a government agency.

Three other persons, identified as Marcom Arguello, Tony Greene and David Taylor, were also named in the indictment, which alleges the trio acted as ghost employees.

The arrests were the result of a four-month joint investigation by Metro Police detectives and the U.S. Department of Labor Organized Crime and Racketeering section, and was code-named "Operation Malversation."

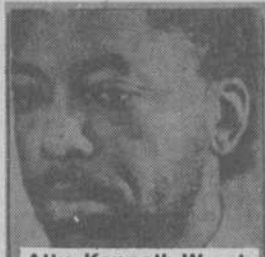
Formerly known as CETA, SNETP is a federal program that provides on-the-job training for low-income workers.

In a joint press conference, Sheriff John Moran and U.S. Attorney Lamond Mills said the alleged scheme to defraud the federal government and the program involved two SNETP counselors who were responsible for enrolling "ghost" participants and businesses in the job training program in order to receive kickbacks.

As part of the alleged scheme, the people involved would use the name of a ghost business to apply for and receive a contract through SNETP, and once they had the contract approved the funds

would be issued to the fictitious employee, investigators said.

Had the alleged scheme continued at its current pace, it would have netted each participating counselor as much as \$50,000 annually, Assistant U.S. Attorney James Erbeck said.



Atty. Kenneth Woods

Raids were carried out at SNETP headquarters at 401 S. Third St., and the other offices of SNETP located at 928 W. Owens Ave., 1820 E. Lake Mead Blvd. in North Las Vegas, and 7-A Water St. in Henderson.

Public assistance program officials with state and federal agencies have shut down SNETP until such time as the investigation is completed, Moran said.

However, SNETP Executive Director Fred Ramirez said the agency remained open during the raids and will con-

tinue to operate despite the setback, Ramirez said.

Moran said, "The scene had vast ramifications because it hits at people at the poverty level and lower income brackets. They need these jobs and the job training, and it is a shame that people who held good positions at SNETP took advantage of the poor."

Both Woods and Williams had been counselors with the program for about 2½ years and earned \$17,000 - \$18,000 annually, Ramirez said.

If convicted, Williams faces a maximum penalty of 41 years imprisonment and \$72,000 in fines. Woods faces 34 years in prison and \$61,000 in fines.

9 local organizations awarded OIC funds

The \$250,000 community development block grant withdrawn from the Las Vegas Opportunities Industrial Center in the wake of a federal probe into embezzlement allegations, was awarded last Wednesday to nine local organizations by the City Council.

The largest amount went to the Center for Employment Training, which was awarded \$65,000 for continuance of its established program.

The other organizations awarded funds were the City's Light Industry Facility (\$49,000), the Nevada Black Chamber of Commerce (\$30,000), the Nevada Association of Latin Americans (\$25,000), the Las Vegas Indian Center (\$21,834), the Nevada Economic Development Co. (\$20,000), the South-

ern Nevada Association for the Physically Handicapped (\$18,166), the Operation Life Outreach Program (\$11,000), and the Poor People Pulling Together program (\$10,000).

"We're going to audit and we're going to audit very heavily," said Councilman Al Levy as the City Council parceled out \$250,000 in federal block grant funds. "We're not going to allocate any funds if there are questions."

The comment reflected the tougher stance the city has taken in the wake of alleged fund misuse at the Las Vegas Opportunities Industrialization Center, which operates job training programs for the poor.

In June, the City Council revoked a \$250,000 grant to the agency, now the target of a federal grand jury investigation. The agency's director, James Chaney, has since resigned.

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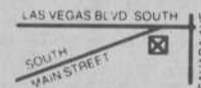
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