

Angel Food Ministries leaders sentenced in money laundering

USATODAY 11:22 a.m. EDT August 30, 2013

<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/08/30/georgia-angel-food-ministries/2739077/>

Story Highlights

- The Ga.-based tax-exempt ministry was supposed to provide food to the poor at discounted prices
- Wesley Wingo admitted to investigators that he used his position with the charity for personal gain
- Wesley and Andrew Wingo pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit money laundering

MONROE, Ga. (AP) — A federal judge sentenced the founder of a food ministry service and his son to seven years in federal prison Thursday on money laundering and conspiracy charges.

Angel Food Ministries founder Wesley Joseph Wingo, 64, and his son, Andrew, 40, were sentenced in U.S. District Court. Wingo's wife — and the organization's co-founder — Linda Wingo, 64, was sentenced to five years of probation for concealing evidence of criminal activity.

The Monroe-based tax-exempt ministry was supposed to provide food to the poor at discounted prices. Wesley Wingo, of Good Hope, used millions of the charity's money to buy jewelry, cars and gambling trips, investigators have said.

Wesley Wingo admitted to investigators that he used his position with the charity for personal gain and allowed family members to do the same. He tried concealing the misapplication of the charity's funds by issuing bonuses to relatives, prosecutors said.

Wesley and Andrew Wingo pleaded guilty in February to conspiracy to commit money laundering. Wesley Wingo is also ordered to forfeit more than \$1.5 million and pay a \$15,000 fine, prosecutors said.

Andrew Wingo admitted to using his position as chief operating officer and head of procurement to buy a house with the charity's money, prosecutors said. He's been ordered to forfeit \$2.4 million.

Linda Wingo pleaded guilty to concealing criminal activity and authorities said she tried hiding facts related to the case when authorities executed a search warrant. She's ordered to pay a \$25,000 criminal fine.

"The Wingos exploited family, friends and neighbors by perpetrating a scheme that was based on lies," Internal Revenue Service Special Agent In Charge Veronica Hyman-Pillot said in a statement.

The charity was founded in 1994 and the family was given a \$7 million low-interest loan from the United States Department of Agriculture in 2005, officials said. The charity grew from local to regional then national in scope, and used churches across the country as host sites to garner donations and distribute food with the help of thousands of volunteers, prosecutors said.

A former employee, Harry Michaels, has also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit wire fraud.