

Zephyr Cove couple sentenced in fraud scheme

A Zephyr Cove couple and their daughter from Illinois have been sentenced in a scheme where they misused a federal internship program.

David Marzano will be going to prison for 26 months, with three years probation to follow his release. He also must pay restitution of \$815,570. His wife, Laura Blair, and their daughter Janece Burke were each sentenced to five years probation. Blair was ordered to pay \$815,570 and Burke \$271,856.67 in restitution.

The trio had been indicted in March 2015. U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Alabama handled the case. The scheme, prosecutors said, spanned 13 states, starting in July 2009.

Marzano has already been to prison. In 2002, he pleaded guilty in the U.S. District Court of the Northern District of Georgia to a conspiracy involving the unlawful smuggling of aliens. The conviction stemmed from a staffing agency Marzano operated in the Atlanta area that utilized an illegal alien workforce. For that offense, he was sentenced to 15 months in prison, followed by three years of supervised release.

After getting out he started to use the aliases Paul Cohen and David Cole. He started a series of staffing agencies and shell companies based in Chicago. The women also went by other names.

“Together, and with the assistance of others, these defendants engaged in a massive, nationwide fraud scheme designed to unlawfully profit from U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Programs,” according to the U.S. Attorney’s Office. “In addition, the defendants created various shell companies

with names that closely resembled well-known corporations. One such shell company was Crowne Partnership Group, which, despite representations made by the defendants, had no association with Crowne Plaza Hotels.”

More than 200 foreign nationals were duped by these three. They lost thousands of dollars.

“Rather than receiving the high-level managerial training they expected, the victims were pawned off as cheap foreign labor to restaurants, hotels, and theme parks. The victims were also required to live in housing arranged by the defendants’ companies. The businesses where the victims worked paid Marzano directly, but the victims only received a small portion of the wages they earned,” according to court documents.

In June 2015, Burke pleaded guilty to conspiring with Marzano and Blair to commit wire and mail fraud. In April 2016, Blair pleaded guilty to the conspiracy charge. Marzano then pleaded guilty to conspiracy, as well as a charge for substantive wire fraud.

– *Lake Tahoe News staff report*