

*** NEWS RELEASE ***

PACIFIC GROVE MAN SENTENCED TO 6 MONTHS IN JAIL FOR GRAND THEFT EMBEZZLEMENT AND EMBEZZLEMENT FROM ELDERS RELATED TO PACIFIC GROVE CONSIGNMENT SHOP

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Monterey County District Attorney Dean D. Flippo announced today that on August 10, Michael Frank Schellhaus, age 50, has pled no contest to felony grand theft by embezzlement, felony grand theft from an elderly person, and misdemeanor petty theft from an elderly person.

In 2014, Schellhaus operated a consignment shop in downtown Pacific Grove by the name of Vintique Boutique. He developed a relationship of trust with many individuals in the community and encouraged them to consign jewelry, furniture, and other personal property with him. Schellhaus agreed to sell these items on their behalf for a percentage of the proceeds. However, rather than abiding by this agreement, he pawned or sold the items and refused to pay the consignors or return the unsold items upon request.

After several victims persisted in seeking payment, Schellhaus opened a checking account using his partner's personal identifying information but never deposited any money into the account. He then wrote multiple checks to victims from this account as "payment," despite his knowledge that the account had no funds. When the victims attempted to cash the checks, they were returned for non-sufficient funds and the victims incurred additional expenses. He also remained in possession of other valuables belonging to these victims, most of which he never returned.

The District Attorney's Office identified at least five victims, three of whom were over the age of 65 at the time of the theft, and estimates that Schellhaus embezzled approximately \$37,000.00 worth of personal property through this scheme. On August 9, 2018, Judge Mark Hood sentenced Schellhaus to four years of felony probation, 180 days in county jail, and full restitution to his victims. Judge Hood immediately remanded Schellhaus into custody upon sentencing. As terms of his probation, Schellhaus must not engage in any consignment business, hold any position of trust for elder adults, or possess any checks in the name of another person without the approval of his probation officer.

This case was investigated by District Attorney Investigator John Ferreria as a result of a consumer complaint submitted to the Environmental and Consumer Protection Unit of the District Attorney's Office. If you have been the victim of fraudulent, deceptive, or illegal business activity or if you would like more information on submitting a consumer complaint, please visit our website at <http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/district-attorney/consumer-and-environmental-protection>.