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To: Hon. Chairwoman Perla Tabares Hantman
and Members, Miami-Dade County School Board

Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent, Miami-Dade County Public Schools

From: Mary T. Cagle, Inspector General 

Date: October 5, 2015

Subject: Announcement of arrest involving the Principal of the North Miami Adult Educational Center for hiring no-show employee, Ref. SB-1314-1014

Jean C. Ridore, Principal of the North Miami Adult Education (NMAE) Center since 2005, was arrested this afternoon involving a “no-show” employment fraud scheme. The investigation culminating in today’s arrest started in July 2014 upon the receipt of several complaints made to the Miami-Dade County Public Schools Office of the Inspector General (OIG) against Principal Ridore alleging a variety of hiring and employment fraud schemes. The allegations ranged from “pay-to-play” arrangements, ghost employees and no-show employees on the payroll, employees required to “kick back” a part of their salary to Principal Ridore, and requiring employees to perform non-school related work for Principal Ridore at his home or for his outside private business.

The multi-agency investigation that resulted in today’s arrest was a joint effort involving the OIG, the State Attorney’s Office Public Corruption Task Force (SAO Task Force), and two of the SAO’s Task Force member agencies—the Miami-Dade Schools Police Department and the City of Miami Police Department. During the investigation, which involved an undercover operation, Principal Ridore accepted the payment of \$1000 in cash in exchange for employment. Thereafter, the undercover officer was officially on the School District’s payroll as a Community Schools Activity Leader III at the North Miami Adult Education Center. Forty (40) hours were submitted on his behalf for the two-week pay period of September 4 through September 17, 2015. The undercover officer holding that position was not required to work or to show-up for work. Today’s arrest came after an agreement was reached where the undercover officer would kick back half of his paycheck to Principal Ridore.

Search warrants were also served today at the NMAE Center for a host of records and documents, and for specified cellular and telecommunications devices. Due to the nature and breadth of the allegations initially received, the joint investigation is continuing into other possible employment frauds taking place at the NMAE Center.

The OIG is grateful for the close cooperative working relationship with the SAO’s Public Corruption Task Force and all of its member agencies. Attached is a press release from the SAO with additional information about today’s arrest and the criminal charges filed.

Attachment

cc: Chief Ian A. Moffett, Miami-Dade Schools Police Department
Walter J. Harvey, School Board Attorney, M-DCPS
Jose Montes de Oca, Chief Auditor, M-DCPS
Daisy Gonzalez-Diego, Chief Communications Officer, M-DCPS



KATHERINE FERNANDEZ RUNDLE STATE ATTORNEY

ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

North Miami Adult Education Center Principal Arrested

Miami (October 5, 2015) As the result of a joint collaborative investigation by the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office Public Corruption Task Force (PC Task Force), the Miami-Dade County Office of the Inspector General (OIG), the Miami-Dade Schools Police (MDCPS Police), and the City of Miami Police Department, the Principal of the North Miami Adult Education Center (NMAE Center), Jean C. Ridore (Ridore), was arrested today. Ridore was charged with Unlawful Compensation, Official Misconduct, and Grand Theft, all felonies. Ridore has been the NMAE Center Principal since July 2005. The NMAE Center, while housed within North Miami Senior High School is an afternoon and night school entity administratively separate from North Miami Senior High School.

"Thinking that you can use government money to benefit yourself is the mentality of a thief, not a public servant," commented State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "Each educational dollar is intended to better individuals and our community, not someone who can manipulate the system. I am proud that this multi-agency law enforcement effort has been able to end such financial abuse. This kind of collaborative Public Schools and law enforcement anti-corruption investigation is one of the strengths of our local community."

Acting on various anonymous complaints about Ridore's hiring and employment practices at NMAE Center, the PC Task Force, the OIG, MDCPS police, and City of Miami joined efforts to conduct an undercover operation. Ridore met with the undercover officer in an alleyway to discuss employment. The undercover officer had been posing as a handyman looking for a school position. Ridore accepted \$1000 in cash in exchange for hiring the "handyman" as a Community Schools Activity Leader III at the NMAE Center. Ridore not only took the cash for the job but also arranged a "kickback" of his new employee's salary. Ridore agreed the handyman would be a "ghost employee", not show up for work, as long as Ridore received 50% of the ghost employee's salary. Ridore, as Principal, approved 40 hours of work for the undercover who never reported to work at NMAE Center.

Ridore was arrested and a search warrant was executed at the NMAE Center. The joint investigation into other "ghost employees" and further improprieties continues.

"Principal Ridore abused the trust given to him as educator and as the school's top administrator by demanding cash payment in exchange for employment. These types of "pay to play" schemes cannot be allowed to exist. The OIG will continue, together with its law enforcement partners, to investigate dishonest public servants who choose to serve themselves at the expense of the public." stated Mary T. Cagle, Inspector General.

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