

Maricopa County Sheriff's Office

Joe Arpaio, Sheriff



Date: August 27, 2008

INFORMATION LEADS SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES TO ANOTHER POTENTIAL EMPLOYERS SANCTIONS VIOLATION

29 Illegal Aliens Arrested Including 20 for Identity Theft

(Phoenix, AZ.) Maricopa County Sheriff's deputies raided two locations early this morning of a Mesa landscaping business after receiving a tip from a former employee that the manager of Artistic Land Management is knowingly hiring dozens of illegal aliens.

After developing the information, deputies determined that of the 127 employees working at the business, 69 of them had employment discrepancies consistent with identity theft, a class 4 felony.

Sheriff Joe Arpaio said today that the investigation began in April of this year and so far has culminated in the identification of 19 Hispanic surnamed males employed at the Mesa business who have clearly used social security numbers not assigned to them.

"The impact that illegal immigration has in our communities coincides with the downturn in our economy," Arpaio says. "In tough times, U.S. citizens need jobs, not illegals."

Four of the social security numbers used belong to deceased people, three of the men used social security numbers where the victims were identified and notified by the Sheriff's Office. The remainder are suspected to either be using stolen or non existing social security numbers.

Maricopa County Attorney Andrew Thomas commented about the case saying, "Our office will review the evidence and determine if criminal or civil offenses have occurred here. In Maricopa County, we enforce the law even when it's politically

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incorrect to do so.”

Search warrants were executed this morning, Arpaio says, on the businesses two locations: 6534 South Rowen Street in Mesa and 2231 West Main in Mesa. Deputies seized personnel files, time cards, employee rosters and work assignments for examination into the company’s hiring practices.

Interviews with a business manager as well as a daily work assignment bulletin board shows some of the businesses clients include the cities of Phoenix, Mesa, and Chandler as well as the Maricopa County Housing Authority.

The owner of the business is Jose Hernandez. Artistic Land Management has been in business for several years.

The witness in the Sheriff’s case informed deputies that for months, she repeatedly advised Hernandez that the social security office was inquiring into social security number discrepancies and that Hernandez told the payroll department employee to “throw the letters away.”

When Hernandez was confronted by Sheriff’s deputies at today’s raid, he refused to talk except through his attorney.

There were 70 workers present this morning at the Main Street location.

Of those, 29 illegal immigrants were arrested, 20 of whom will be booked on state felony charges of identity theft.

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