

**News from the Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities**  
*Protecting, Advocating and Ensuring Quality of Life for People with Disabilities*

Andrew Cuomo, Governor  
Roger Bearden, Chair

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**CQC Investigation Recovers \$115,000 Stolen from Residents of Program for Disabled**  
**Restitution of Funds Comes Just in Time for the Holidays**

An investigation by the Commission on Quality of Care and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities (CQC) has resulted in the restitution of over \$115,000 in funds stolen from 16 clients of Academy Green Residences, Inc., a Kingston-based program for individuals with disabilities.

As a result of the CQC probe, the program surrendered its license to operate and its former Executive Director, Tom Ngowe, was indicted in September for grand larceny, scheming to defraud and endangering the welfare of persons with disabilities. From 2007 to 2010, Ngowe is accused of systematically skimming the money from the resident's paychecks and bank accounts, as well as from Social Security payments.

"I'm pleased that our investigation has made a real difference in the lives of these people," said CQC Chair Roger Bearden. "They have told our investigators that the return of their money is allowing them to buy and do things they've always wanted but couldn't afford. It's especially gratifying that our work has resulted in the return of their money in time for the holidays."

In follow up interviews with CQC staff, three of the victims said they will be using the money to go to Hawaii in the spring, while another is planning a trip to Florida. One individual said he is planning on purchasing a new television and radio for his bedroom, while another bought a new desk. Several others said the return of their money has allowed them to buy new clothing and Christmas gifts for their family members this year.

Following its investigation, CQC issued several recommendations for corrective actions, including improved inspection protocols over the personal accounts of people who are served by such residential programs. The Office of People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD), which licensed Academy Green, agreed with CQC's findings and is implementing the needed changes.

"OPWDD will continue to work in conjunction with CQC to further ensure that organizations serving people with developmental disabilities, and those working for them, do not prey on the individuals who rely on them for support," said OPWDD Commissioner Courtney Burke.

The Academy Green program has since been taken over by a local non-profit chosen by OPWDD following a competitive search for a new residential service provider.

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