



PRESS RELEASE
August 10, 2015

On August 7, 2015, Matthew Shane Harmon, 34, of Denison, was sentenced to 5 years in prison for Theft Over \$1,500 Less Than \$20,000. Harmon pled guilty to the offense and was sentenced by 59th District Court Judge Rayburn Nall in accordance with a plea agreement reached with the Grayson County District Attorney's Office.

On December 3, 2014, the Denison Police Department was contacted by a local business who reported that a man identifying himself as Matt Harmon had entered the establishment and asked for monetary donations to support a Denison youth basketball team. The business gave a donation, but became suspicious about the legitimacy of the solicitation and contacted police. Denison Detective John Watt contacted the check cashing business where the business' check had been cashed and obtained a listing of all of the checks that Mathew Harmon had cashed at the business. Upon discovering that Harmon had cashed at least 29 other donation checks from area businesses, Watt began following up with these businesses to determine the circumstances of their donations.

Multiple businesses reported to detectives a variety of stories of having donated to a man named Mathew Harmon. Harmon told all of the businesses that he was raising money for youth sports teams - sometimes it was girls basketball teams and sometimes it was a girls' softball team. Harmon would tell businesses how the teams were at risk of not being able to go "to state," and would promise t-shirts and pictures of the children that the businesses were helping with their donations. Police found records of Harmon cashing more than \$3,700 from small donation checks.

Detectives interviewed Harmon, who after initially claiming his efforts were legitimate fundraising, ultimately admitted the crime to the police and stated that his motive for the theft was to support his drug habit.

"It never ceases to amaze me how many ways people can come up with to cheat," said Grayson County District Attorney Joe Brown. "This not only hurt these businesses, it also hurts those good kids and coaches who are trying to legitimately raise money for their teams."

The case was prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Britton Brooks. "This was some good police work – a very proactive investigation," said Brooks. "Where it would have been easy to just file a minor case on the first theft case he discovered, Detective Watt worked hard to track all of these donations down to their source and put together a larger case where we could make sure it was treated as the serious theft it was."

Harmon was represented by Sherman attorney Joey Fritts.

