



# BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



**MICHAEL L. RAMSEY**  
District Attorney

**MARK MURPHY**  
Chief Deputy District Attorney

**JASON WINES**  
Chief Investigator

## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
October 21, 2022

### CHICO MAN SENTENCED FOR EMBEZZLING \$54,000 FROM NON-PROFIT

A Chico man was sentenced in Butte County Superior Court yesterday to probation and jail time for embezzling money from local non-profit Little Red Hen Plant Nursery and stealing money from a dependent adult who also worked there.

In November 2021, employees of Little Red Hen Plant Nursery contacted Chico Police Department and reported a possible embezzlement took place from December of 2020 through November of 2021. The Little Red Hen Plant Nursery is a non-profit organization that employs adults with developmental disabilities. An audit of their books showed missing cash from daily deposits and unauthorized purchases on the organization's credit cards in an amount over \$54,000.

Chico Police detectives began an investigation and identified the thief as former employee **Andrew Spang, 34, of Chico**. Spang had no developmental disabilities and as a manager had access to the organization's cash deposits and credit cards, which he used to make fraudulent charges.

Spang made several fraudulent purchases with those credit cards before turning to a scheme where he would use the credit cards to shift money to his mother's PayPal account. She would then send that payment back to the defendant's PayPal account. Spang's mother stated Spang had told her he was using a new personal credit card to pay down debt on his other credit cards and needed her help as an intermediary. When PayPal learned these transactions were fraudulent, PayPal cancelled the transactions and attached the debt to Spang's mother's account leaving her approximately \$18,000 of debt. Detectives felt the mother was an unwitting victim of Spang's scheme to basically launder his ill-gotten gains through her accounts.

In addition to embezzling money from the Little Red Hen organization, Spang made a \$455 fraudulent transaction on a PayPal account belonging to another Little Red Hen employee with a developmental disability. Spang gained access to this employee's PayPal account from an old personal computer the employee had loaned to Spang.

When Spang was arrested by the Chico police detectives, he admitted to the embezzlement and making the fraudulent transaction on the fellow employee's PayPal account. Spang stated he used the money to fund his addiction to the illicit opioid Tianeptine, which he bought online.

Spang was charged with and convicted of felony grand theft by embezzlement and misdemeanor theft from a dependent adult. Giving consideration to Spang's previous clean record, the sentencing judge ordered Spang to serve two years of formal felony probation and to serve 120 days in the Butte County Jail. Additionally, the judge ordered Spang to repay the full amount he stole from Little Red Hen and the fellow employee.

