

JOBS APLENTY FOR EX-TOP

Records detail Regina Evans' hiring for nonprofit and in Country Club Hills

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As part of a venture that led to the indictments of former Country Club Hills Police Chief Regina Evans and her husband, Ronald Evans Jr., for allegedly skimming from a \$1.25 million state grant, they paid family and acquaintances with money that was supposed to go to a nonprofit group she ran, federal investigators say.

When the nonprofit group unraveled, some of those acquaintances were hired to work for Regina Evans at the Country Club Hills Police Department, records show.

Now, as the Evanses prepare for their upcoming federal trials on mail fraud and money-laundering charges, some of those who were hired say they saw signs of trouble, including an accountant who questioned whether the nonprofit program ever existed and another who said, "I'm taking myself out of this" when he became suspicious something wasn't right.

Those hired by the Evanses included Regina's brother, the daughter of a prominent South Side minister, a former Chicago cop on parole after killing a teen in a car crash and the daughter of the state employee tasked with ensuring the grant money was spent properly, a SouthtownStar analysis found.

Background

The nonprofit started by the Evanses, We Are Our Brother's Keeper, secured a \$1.25 million state grant from the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity in February 2009. The money was supposed to be used to help train 40 workers involved in restoring the dilapidated New Regal Theater on Chicago's South Side.

But federal investigators say the Evanses misappropriated more than \$500,000 of those grant funds, using almost half for the mortgage on the Regal building and payments to their friends, family, associates and to Regina Evans between February 2009 and June 2010.

Both have pleaded not guilty. Regina and Ron Evans did not respond to several attempts to contact them for comment on this story.

Regina Evans' pretrial conference is set for Feb. 19 with the jury trial set for March 5.

We are our brother's employer

After getting the grant money, the Evans-



We Are Our Brother's Keeper secured a grant to restore the New Regal Theater on Chicago's South Side, money that federal investigators say was misappropriated. | FILE PHOTO

es paid themselves \$12,000 a month in rent and went on a hiring spree, records show.

Among those hired:

- Regina's brother Ricky McCoy. Evans told the state she would train about 40 women and minorities for bricklaying and electrical careers, with help also available for completing GEDs. She didn't tell them that McCoy would be in charge of running the programs and finding jobs for the trainees.

Between January and early March 2010, state officials repeatedly asked Evans to explain \$96,000 in unauthorized rent payments to herself and her husband from the grant and the hiring of McCoy, records show.

Evans defended his hiring, writing, "He is very qualified and does an admirable job for the program and the people we serve."

- Ex-cop Charlton McKay, who had served in the Calumet District of Chicago, where Ronald Evans' father was a commander. At the time of his hire, McKay was on parole after being convicted of reckless homicide, leaving the scene of an accident and filing a false police report stemming from a 2005 crash in which a 15-year-old pedestrian was killed. McKay was supposed to handle

community development and oversee the students' construction sites, according to Regina Evans' grant application. McKay did not respond to multiple messages left at his home.

- At least two employees said they worked only for Regina Evans' private company that bought and ran the theater, The Prime Time Group, and not for We Are Our Brother's Keeper.

One of them was Jeri Wright, the daughter of the Rev. Jeremiah Wright — President Barack Obama's former pastor. She described herself as "close to Regina Evans as a blood relative" and told the SouthtownStar the work she did for Evans wasn't for the foundation, although state records show she was paid about \$16,000 from the grant money.

She said she did contract work to set up field trips to construction sites and bring in speakers.

"I didn't know anything about the inner workings of how she received the money, nothing about the grant money, nothing at all," Jeri Wright said.

Wright said she handled "things that concerned construction companies" but

declined to provide details.

"I don't want to add any stress to her life," Wright said. "I'm praying that her family's health stays intact as all of this is unfolding."

Robert Stampas, listed in grant documents as a contracted web developer and photographer, told a similar story.

"I worked for the Regal Theater, I didn't work for the foundation," Stampas said. "When the Regal went under, that's when our relationship went under."

"There's nothing else I'd like to say," he said. "She (Regina) is in enough trouble."

The Evanses declared bankruptcy on the Prime Time Group in late 2010. When the New Regal venture failed, the historic building, 1641 E. 79th St., went into foreclosure. It was sold at auction in September to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

In July, a Cook County judge ordered that We Are Our Brother's Keeper repay the state \$917,194 in misspent grant funds.

New jobs in CCH

Both Evanses had lucrative jobs in Country Club Hills, Regina as police chief, Ronald as the inspector general tasked with investigating her department.