

# Nurse gets probation

Judge fines her \$5G, orders \$800G restitution in fiscal aid bribery ruse

BY JOHN RILEY

john.riley@newsday.com

Annice Kpana, a Long Island nurse who stole nearly \$800,000 in a financial aid bribery scheme but cooperated with the government when she was caught, was sentenced to probation in Manhattan federal court on Monday.

Kpana, 36, of Valley Stream, pleaded guilty last year to con-

spiring with a financial aid director of Columbia University's Teachers College and others to receive undeserved stipends and then kick back half the money to the aid director, Melanie Williams-Bethea.

The scheme went on for nearly a decade. Prosecutors said Kpana, who kept taking aid after she graduated, netted \$400,000 for herself, and took trips with Williams-Bethea to

the Caribbean, Hawaii and New Orleans, using scammed stipends to pay for travel.

But at her sentencing, prosecutor Alex Rossmiller said Kpana's quick cooperation as soon as she was charged led to guilty pleas by other participants. After she expressed deep remorse, U.S. District Judge Allison Nathan agreed to let her off with no jail time.

"I truly apologize," Kpana told the judge in front of a courtroom packed with her family and supporters. "I made a mistake. I lost my Christian way." She burst into tears when

the judge said she wasn't going to prison.

Nathan put Kpana on probation for two years, imposed a \$5,000 fine and ordered restitution of \$796,427. Advisory federal sentencing guidelines called for Kpana to receive 46 to 57 months in prison.

According to court filings, Kpana graduated from the teachers college in 2009 but kept receiving aid until 2017, and she later got her nursing degree from Rutgers. Her lawyer said the case could potentially put her nursing license at risk.

Williams-Bethea, 49, of Springfield Gardens, Queens, was sentenced to 40 months in prison. Two students involved in the kickback scheme who did not cooperate were sentenced respectively to a year and a day in prison and to three months in prison.

The college, in a letter filed by its law firm with the judge, said the scam in aggregate caused \$2 million in losses and damaged its finances, reputation and "sense of trust," and called for sentences "commensurate with the substantial damage."

## Suffolk's \$2M pilot program to aid disabled

BY RICK BRAND

rick.brand@newsday.com

Suffolk County is launching a \$2 million pilot project to help lower the cost of wastewater hookups for housing projects that permanently dedicate apartments to adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities, County Executive Steve Bellone announced Monday.

The money, to be allocated over the next year, is aimed to help the 25,425 adults in Suffolk with intellectual or developmental disabilities, 63 percent of whom live with family caregivers. Officials are particularly concerned about some 6,400 disabled adults whose family caregivers are older than 60 and will eventually need their own housing.

"A big question for most families . . . is what will happen to their child, once they pass on," said Bellone. The problem is urgent because "we're on the cusp of a tsunami here with a longer life expectancy . . . We have more people to serve than ever before with resources that continue to be limited," Bellone said.

Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), minority leader, said the plan will give more options to families who "often face heartbreaking and financially impossible choices."

The funding will go to lower the cost of hookups for housing units in multifamily apartment complexes for adults with disabilities who can live on their own with other state support. Each project would require county legislative approval.

Mitchell Pally, chief executive officer of the Long Island Builders Institute, estimated that 200 to 300 units could be built as part of the pilot program in which sewer hookup benefits would go to as many as 25 percent of the apartments set aside for those with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

Pally said builders will be interested. "If we can find appropriate sites, our members will build them," he said.

Legis. William Lindsay III (D-Bohemia) whose younger sister has Down syndrome, said the issue has affected his family. "The concern," Lindsay said, "is always what is the succession plan going to be."



Steve Bellone: "We have more people to serve than ever before with resources that continue to be limited."