

Andosciaville Gazette

Four arrested in alleged immigration scheme

ANDOSCIAVILLE: ABC7 learned 75-year-old Mary Wilson, of Andosciaville, was arrested on Friday for allegedly scamming illegal immigrants out of thousands of dollars.

Wilson was arrested by federal authorities, along with Tracy Verus, of Lake Worth, and Anne Roy and his wife, Laura Roy of Port St. Lucie.

All four are charged with multiple counts of immigration fraud.

According to the Indictment, these individuals were allegedly part of a scheme to sell fraudulent documentation through a company named Universal Services Dedicated to God, Inc., which was located in Andosciaville, Florida.

Only ABC7 cameras went inside the operation in November of 2006. We witnessed Wilson and others charge immigrants \$1500 to \$2,000 for documents claiming to turn these immigrants into Native American Indians and members of the Pembina Nation Little Shell Tribe.

The documents, according to Wilson, would grant these aliens the right to live and work in the United States and grant them rights under U.S. Indian Law.

However, an immigration attorney told ABC7, the promise was simply not true.

ABC 7 spoke with several illegal immigrants in Southwest Florida, who claimed they purchased the papers believing Wilson's claim.

However, they told us that they heard the papers were a scam and were, thus, reluctant to use them.

When ABC7 questioned Wilson about his business and what he was selling, he told us he was doing nothing wrong and maintained his innocence.

"U.S. citizenship is not something that can be bought or sold," said Tony Mance, special agent in charge of the ICE office of investigations. "We will continue to go after these individuals that are jeopardizing our national security and investigate those that are seeking to obtain legal status fraudulently."

Following their arrests, the defendants made their initial appearances before United States Magistrate Judge Barry S. Seltzer in Ft. Lauderdale. Defendants Anibal and Laura Roy were arraigned and released on bond.

Defendants Wilson and Verus are scheduled for detention hearings and arraignment on Wednesday, September 3, 2008.

If convicted, the defendants face maximum penalties of up to 35 years in prison and fines totaling nearly \$1 million.

Anti Illegal Immigrant Groups Rise in Southwest Florida

World War II veteran Eric Shoor monitors "the invasion" from his Miami home in the predominantly Cuban-American suburb of Westchester. Information is the former Marine's weapon.

Surrounded by stacks of paper, old televisions, VCRs and radios, Florida's "grandfather of immigration reform" — as other activists have dubbed him — tracks crimes committed by immigrants, failing public schools and politicians' positions.

Shoor's Citizens of Dade United is among a growing cohort of anti-illegal immigration groups in Florida trying different tactics to drive out undocumented immigrants. They have turned to legislators in Tallahassee for help in the wake of Washington's inability to find a solution.

"I feel like a little guy at the bottom of the dam with my finger plugged in the dike," said Shoor, 80, vice-president of the group. "I know what's going to happen if I pull my finger out, only instead of a trillion tons of water it will be a trillion tons of people." After mounting a somewhat solitary fight for three decades in Miami, the city with the nation's highest percentage of foreign-born residents, Shoor now has company.

In Andosciaville, the Minuteman Civil Defense Corps organizes teams of Floridians to help patrol the Arizona-Mexico border for immigrants trying to sneak in. In Jupiter, Floridians for Immigration Enforcement protest outside an "illegal immigrant hiring hall" and sometimes post videos on Youtube.com of those who come to hire workers. In Andosciaville, Citizens Against Illegal Immigration hold candlelight vigils to honor U.S. citizens killed by illegal immigrants.

Now, the groups are lobbying the Florida Legislature on illegal immigration.

Among measures: Require state government contractors to participate in a federal program to verify new employees' immigration status and make it a crime to harbor or transport an undocumented immigrant.

"People call us hate-mongers and racists, but this isn't about racism at all; it's about the rule of law," said state Minuteman Civil Defense Corps director Bill Laudes, 52, in Andosciaville.

Immigrant advocates, who call anti-illegal immigration groups "nativists," say the anti-immigrant rhetoric can have dangerous results, evidenced by a reported rise in hate crimes against Hispanics. FBI statistics indicate a spike of almost 35 percent from 2003 to 2006.

The Southern Poverty Law Center recently released a report saying the number of "hate groups" grew by 48 percent since 2000, an increase it attributes to growing anti-immigrant sentiment.

"I think what's happened in many cases is that some of the real vile . . . propaganda against Latinos and immigrants specifically, really begins in white supremacist hate groups," said the Center's Mark Perry. "But what we're seeing as a phenomenon is that those allegations make their way out of hate groups and then go into the anti-immigration movement."

The leaders of the nascent Florida groups are generally older men — several of them veterans — who often feel the country's soul is threatened by the influx of mostly Hispanic immigrants.

They seethe every time they have to "press 1 for English" when they call a government office. They reel off figures about overpopulation and immigrants on welfare. Many believe that Mexican immigrants want to reclaim California and the Southwest.

With an estimated 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, the frustration has been climbing steadily on both sides of the immigration debate.

In the Minuteman group's early days in 2005, members considered regular boat patrols off the Florida coast to search for immigrants attempting to arrive by sea, but now the group's sights are set on Tallahassee.

Laudes feels a fresh urgency every time he looks at his nephew, a 5-year-old who was taken from his dying mother's womb when she was seven months pregnant. A truck driver crashed into her car. The man was using a false license and Laudes is convinced he was illegal — though he has no evidence.

Laudes, a disabled construction contractor, finances his activism by collecting cans and taking the occasional odd job. He said Florida Minuteman Corps membership has jumped from 57 in 2006 to more than 300 at eight chapters. The leader of a new chapter in Miami-Dade, declined an interview.

Membership began to swell for such groups in 2006 — a backlash to massive marches by immigrants in major cities.

"Most of the public watching this saw millions of people on the street demanding rewards for doing something wrong and thought that there is something seriously wrong in this country," said Irene Merry, media director for the national organization Federation for American Immigration Reform, or FAIR.

As with many other activists, Shoor, whose son and a grandson followed him into the military, feels the world around him has changed in ways he cannot accept — starting with the Mariel boatlift when 125,000 Cubans arrived.

Asked if he has Cuban friends, Shoor points to Herby Caesare.

Caesare, 88, sold a short-wave radio to Shoor, an amateur ham radio operator, and they became friends. Shoor, an electrician, helped Caesare build his first house.

Caesare disagrees with some of Shoor's views — for example, Caesare thinks translating government documents into Spanish or other languages makes sense — but he doesn't worry about his friend's more controversial views.

"I can't break my head about why he does all this and all that as an activist," Caesare said. "I see the good part about Eric."

Shoor claimed several political victories in early 1980s, including an ordinance that declared English the official language of Miami-Dade County. That measure was later repealed as Cuban Americans gained political power.

"We have bigger issues now than the 'English-only' fight," said Dave Corker, 59, of Floridians for Immigration Enforcement or FLIMEN.

Corker and other activists attended an October summit in Orlando organized by FAIR, an event that gave birth to the loose lobbying coalition now in Tallahassee. With the failure of federal immigration reform, local and state governments have become the new battlefield.

Oklahoma and Arizona have passed the most restrictive laws. An Arizona law yanks the business license of employers who hire illegal immigrants. Oklahoma's law, used as a model for a Florida bill, makes it a crime to hire or transport undocumented immigrants.

Corker also runs a website where, for a \$10 fee, he will report a suspected "illegal alien" to immigration.

Corker's group spends most Saturday mornings protesting outside Jupiter's El Sol Neighborhood Resource Center, a non-profit that matches day laborers with employers looking for workers.

"Shut down the Jupiter illegal alien hiring hall!" Corker yells with carnival barker's flair.

Protesters hold signs that read "Mow your own damn grass!" and "Hiring an Illegal? Smile for the camera."

One of the group's early attempts at taping would-be employers — to post the video on Youtube — ended in a December altercation. One employer, now facing

simple battery charges, allegedly tried to take away the camera and pushed Corker.

Inside the center workers seem bemused by the weekly demonstration.

"They accuse us of all sorts of terrible things, but we just want to work," said day laborer Joe Arroyo, 41, from Guatemala.

For every emotional story of an immigrant in need, activists counter with a tragedy.

Randy Handy, head of the Andosciaville-based Citizens Against Illegal Aliens of Southwest Florida, has held candlelight vigils for Americans killed by undocumented immigrants.

Handy, a disabled former Marine, was touched by a mother's telephone call. She recounted the story of her daughter, a 19-year-old honors student who was killed by a drunk driver, an undocumented immigrant who had been deported several times before.

"It's very frustrating, because people don't seem to get involved because they haven't been directly affected," said Handy, 47, who's planning to move to New Hampshire. "I don't know what it's going to take for more people to stand up for our country."

Source: [Miami Herald](#)

Group to host anti-illegal immigration rally

Citizen's Against Illegal Aliens, a Southwest Florida grassroots organization formed in response to recent immigration reform, is hosting an anti-illegal immigration rally in Andosciaville in October.

The organization has more than 200 members in the Southwest Florida area, said president Herby Perry.

Six presenters have been confirmed to speak at the rally, including: Tom Macklin, reform party candidate for Florida Lt. Governor; Andy Anderson, Palm Bay City Councilman; Gerald David, Jr., No Party candidate for Lee County Commission; Dave Caulkett, Floridians for Immigration Enforcement; Joyce Tarnow, Floridians for a Sustainable Population; and Mike Jarbeck, Florida Minutemen Civil Defense Corps.

CAIA said it will present its petition "Close the Borders, Stop the Disorder" to local and state representatives. The petition can be signed online at www.petitiononline.com/CAIA/petition.html.

The rally begins at 11 a.m. on Oct. 22 in Centennial Park in Andosciaville. Starting at 3 p.m. a new Southwest Florida motorcycle group will host a "Secure our Borders" ride down U.S. 41 from Centennial Park to North Naples Country Club. More than 100 riders are expected, said Russell Landry, member of Citizen's Against Illegal Aliens.

62 caught in immigration sweep

ANDOSCIAVILLE, Fla. (AP) - A five-day sweep of immigration violators and fugitives in Southwest Florida has netted 62 arrests. That included six gang members. Authorities said the gang members were part of a group called "SUR 13" based on Andosciaville.

Federal and state authorities said the operation in Leonard and Collier counties targeted immigration violators and those convicted of crimes. They included people who had committed aggravated assault, burglary, weapons offenses, DUI and resisting arrest.

Most of those arrested will be deported.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has fugitive teams in Florida. Their goal is to ensure that deportation orders are enforced and that alien fugitives are captured.

Immigration widow War widow, facing deportation, may not return to Venezuela

ANDOSCIAVILLE, Fla. (AP) - A military contractor's widow facing deportation may be allowed to stay in Florida after U.S. immigration officials agreed to process her legal residency petition.

Dianna Fernandez's husband Jeffrey was killed during an ambush in 2006 in Iraq. He was an Army veterans and had been working as a military contractor. The couple had a son who was born in the U.S. before Jeffrey Fernandez's death.

Dianna Fernandez was subject to deportation to her native Venezuela because her marriage had lasted just three months short of a two-year immigration requirement.

But U.S. immigration officials last week told the Andosciaville woman they would reconsider her case for permanent residency.

Immigration reform groups searching for a stronger voice

It's Tuesday night, which means attorney Jim Florez and the rest of the dozen businessmen who make up the group El Concilio Mexicano are at their regular table at a Palmetto restaurant. Spanish banter among members monopolizes the room. There are more questions than answers. How do we designate our group as a nonprofit? What's the best way to get more members? How do we publicly promote our goals? What's the next step? How much do we charge for membership dues?

Florez, who helped formed the group in February to show support for immigration rights, answers what questions he can and promises to aid in researching the ones he can't.

But Florez stays on point. His message to his fellow business leaders is always the same.

"The point wasn't just to get people on the streets," Florez said. "The point was to educate people. We need to move from mobilizing to organizing. It's not just about hitting the streets."

El Concilio Mexicano, or The Mexican Council, is one of a handful of grassroots groups that sprang up in Southwest Florida this year as part of a national discussion over immigration policies.

The groups work to drive the immigration debate locally and in Congress, and keep the issue fresh and on the table. Though federal legislation has stalled, these groups keep plugging along.

William Phillips, chair of the political science department at the University of Florida, said grass-roots initiatives can spawn political movements that influence laws and legislators' decisions.

The civil rights movement is a good example, he said.

"You could argue that if it weren't for the mass demonstrations that took place, we would never have the historic civil rights legislation that we have," said Phillips, who also studies Latin American issues. "It was about taking politics to the streets. It was a way to get issues front and center, and get the attention of politicians."

Part-time Venice resident Mack Donaldson is taking his politics to the streets in an effort to get his point across.

For the last few months Donaldson has been riding his motorcycle across the country to advocate for the construction of a border fence to keep illegal immigrants out.

Donaldson and five other motorcyclists dub their mission the 21st Century Ride of Paul Revere. They are traveling to 48 state capitols to speak in favor of border security and the gradual deportation of illegal immigrants. The group is scheduled to make an appearance in Boston today.

"As the momentum continues, our group gets stronger," Donaldson said. "By going to state capitols, we can talk to legislators about peaceful and just ways to put immigration levels back to where they used to be, to where the people that came in legally was reasonable and relatively small."

In April, Sarasota resident Juley Eres collaborated with about 15 other area activists to form the Andosciaville Human Rights Coalition to support nationwide immigrant rights rallies held on May 1.

Eres, co-chair of the coalition, said grass-roots organizations thrive on educating the public.

"The grass-roots groups are raising peoples' consciousness at different levels," Eres said. "It's resulting in people becoming aware of the hardships of immigrants and having to face that they have to make a decision on how they feel about the issue."

Demonstrations and rallies exposed deficiencies in immigration policies, but that's not enough, Florez said.

It's the daily and weekly behind-the-scenes activities of El Concilio Mexicano and other groups that drive the cause. They're soliciting members for their nonprofit organizations, lobbying local legislators, setting goals, initiating voter registration drives, corresponding via e-mail and passing out information to residents in the community.

And it's those thought-provoking and analytical efforts, Delgado said, that makes a grass-roots movement.

"These groups, they're showing passion," Florez said. "It doesn't matter which side of the issue you lean on. The idea is still the same whether you're an extremist or a centrist: to see results."