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has been sentenced to serve at least 15 years in prison.

Feb. 11, 2013

A Greensboro, North Carolina woman who was convicted of stealing more than \$800,000 from a local drug store has been sentenced to serve at least 15 years in prison. Debra Sells Elkins, 58, pleaded guilty to 12 felony counts in Guilford County Superior Court late last week.

Elkins was a former bookkeeper at Brown-Gardiner Drug Co., a pharmacy and soda fountain. She was accused of writing out checks to cash and pocketing some of the shop's state sales and use taxes instead of sending them to Raleigh, according to Susan Caviness, the company's current bookkeeper.

Caviness said Elkins' wrongdoing went back to at least 2005, and was discovered in 2010.

"She was a very trusted, very valued employee," Caviness said. "She worked here about 14 years altogether, starting over at the soda fountain. But she turned out to be as dishonest as they come."

Elkins pleaded guilty to six counts each of embezzlement and obtaining property under false pretense. She was sentenced to three consecutive prison sentences of 5 years to 6 years, 9 months.

Caviness said that Elkins bought, among other things, a mobile home, cruise tickets and a warehouse for another business that she ran, during the years she was embezzling.

In 2010, she spent \$10,000 on a "miscellaneous debit" drawing the attention of company owner Robert Shearin.

“He asked what it was for, and she said it was to pay down a line of credit, and he

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Estimate. Caviness said, LHM was discovered to have taken more than \$800,000. She was arrested in September 2010.

“We could have been shut down,” Caviness said. “We’ve just worked really hard and diligently to be able to survive. A lot of businesses would have gone under.”

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