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worked from May 2009 to 2012, said Assistant Prosecutor Dan Ferguson.

Feb. 22, 2013

Kristen Bowling, a former staff accountant for the Fitton Center for Creative Arts in Hamilton, Ohio, has pleaded guilty to aggravated theft for stealing \$164,000 from the arts center over the last four years.

Bowling had been writing herself an extra paycheck or adding on hours that she had not worked from May 2009 to 2012, said Assistant Prosecutor Dan Ferguson.

She entered the plea to the third-degree felony before Butler County Judge Noah Powers. She faces up to 36 months in prison and a \$10,000 fine.

The front row of the courtroom was filled with Fitton employees, some wearing arts center T-shirts. They declined comment after the hearing.

Powers ordered a pre-sentence investigation and set sentencing for April 16. Bowling was released on her own recognizance, told to report to pretrial services and warned not to leave the state. She has also agreed to make restitution.

Despite at least one audit, officials said Bowling was able to find a loophole and take advantage of it.

An end-of-year review of finances and employee pay turned up the missing money, Ferguson said. Bowling, who was in charge of payroll, was off when the review occurred.

“The Fitton Center for Creative Arts regrets that this theft occurred. The problem that existed that allowed this to happen has been fixed and it will not happen again,” Arts

center officials said in a statement issued after the guilty plea. “The case is being

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“She took immediate responsibility,” Garretson said. “(The money) did not go to a lavish lifestyle. It didn’t go into the gambling boats or drugs. It was just spent on all the things that are a part of a family and children.”

Garretson said Bowling feels terrible about the effect on the Fitton Center.

“She let them down when they trusted her,” Garretson said.

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