

By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

Keith County Court Judge Michael Piccolo presided over an arraignment last week of former Keith County Attorney Blake Edwards and his wife, Shirley.

The two were charged with alleged embezzlement of nearly \$18,000 from the Keith County Diversion Program.

Charges were filed following a three-month investigation by the Nebraska State Patrol.

The alleged embezzlement occurred during the time Blake Edwards served as Keith County attorney. He has been replaced by Randy Fair who was elected for the position of county attorney in November.

John Blake Edwards, 48, is charged with three counts of alleged theft by unlawful taking, two of them being Class II felonies and one as a Class IV felony.

His 45-year-old wife Shirley Edwards was charged with two counts of alleged theft by unlawful taking, one a Class III felony and the other a Class IV felony.

Ogallala attorney Kevin O'Donnell represented the couple at their arraignment Jan. 31.

A preliminary hearing has been set for each of the defendants on March 28 at 1 p.m.