

Allegations land coin company in courtroom

By **BETH GALLASPY**
THE ENTERPRISE

BEAUMONT — A Beaumont-based coin company with \$60 million in sales last year is ensnared in litigation, accusing former employees of betrayal in one lawsuit and standing accused of defrauding customers in two others.

Universal Coin & Bullion has sued former employees John Rollins and Shannon Smith, contending they shared confidential information about its customer base and business practices.

According to two lawsuits against the company filed by former clients, those business practices include using false and misleading information in high-pressure telephone sales.

Universal Coin & Bullion attorney Bruce Partain attributed one customer's lawsuit to Rollins' actions in violation of his confidentiality agreement with the company.

Rollins made "unfounded allegations" of fraud by the company in communications with customer

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community college system, teaching economics and management courses. He also worked at the university level.

Szuch has served as the assistant dean of instruction, provost at each of Pasco-Hernando Community College's three campuses, and most

students in an administrative position than just as a faculty member in a classroom. I felt that somewhere there was the right place at the right time for me to become a college president where I could make a significant difference."

LIT was a different institu-

the community and the types or programs we offer, with over 50 different offerings, are in response to what business and industry says we need to do."

Szuch was born in Texas when his father was a baseball player in the minor leagues.

we've missed over the past few years ... (and) having a new set of eyes brings a freshness that we haven't had and perhaps it's going to be a great thing for the school," Wood said.

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COIN: One hearing on Friday; others come next week

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Roxanne Charnock during an extended absence from work and after he was fired Feb. 20, the coin company claims in a countersuit against Charnock.

Rollins also put Charnock in contact with Houston lawyer Bill Voss, who initially represented her, Partain said.

Houston lawyer Jake Posey, who represents Rollins and Smith, said Rollins was trying to protect his customers. In a counterclaim against the company, Rollins contends he was fired because he "refused to continue committing ... illegal acts," including deceptive business practices, fraud and credit card abuse and misuse.

Charnock's suit was filed March 13, less than a week after Universal Coin & Bullion filed suit against former employees Rollins and Smith. Charnock, an Illinois resident, said she spent nearly \$800,000 with the company on the promise that her investment

could increase up to 1,100 percent.

In cases such as Charnock's, which are filed under the Texas Deceptive Trade Practices Act, the company must receive 60 days' notice, said Jason Gibson, Charnock's lawyer.

Gibson, based in Houston, said he has given the coin company written notice of lawsuits he intends to file for three other former coin customers.

A similar suit filed by Beaumont lawyer Glen Morgan on behalf of New York resident Mary Ann Kaiser also is pending in Jefferson County. Kaiser's dealings were with First National Reserve, another coin company in the same complex as UCB on Phelan Boulevard and with some of the same owners.

Voss and Jerry Jordan, a reporter with a Beaumont weekly not affiliated with The Beaumont Enterprise, were added as defendants last week in the coin company's lawsuit against the former employees.

Partain said several customers had notified the coin company they were upset at receiving letters and telephone calls from Jordan and Voss, who did not have business relationships with the company.

"We've had some people

that have told us that they no longer want to do business with us," Partain said.

Hearings related to the coin company's suit against the former employees, Voss and Jordan are scheduled next week

before 172nd District Court Judge Donald Floyd. A hearing in Charnock's case is scheduled for Friday.

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