

Angel Food co-founders attend meeting in York

By **MELISSA NANN BURKE**
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The Revs. Wesley "Joe" and Linda Wingo, the co-founders of Angel Food Ministries Inc., spoke at a gathering of about 100 volunteers a York church Thursday night.

People who attended the invitation-only meeting said the Wingos and their representatives explained they could say little about a search warrant executed by the FBI and IRS Wednesday at the headquarters of the discount-food charity in Monroe, Ga.

As they left the meeting, the Wingos did not respond to requests for comment before getting into a car and leaving.

AFM spokesman Judo Engelmayer said the government investigation is of an individual or individuals.

"It's not the ministry itself, it's not the work; it's not the host sites," he said.

Engelmayer explained that the agencies did not "raid" the Monroe offices, and that AFM "had a good idea they were coming."

The agents copied records from a computer server and did not remove anything, Engelmayer said.

The York meeting was called in part to address issues raised in a **Daily Record/Sunday News** article last month and to answer questions about it from local volunteers. It is not clear whether the search in Georgia had anything to do with the issues raised in the article.

The York visit was also "a goodwill tour, because that's what we do," Engelmayer said. "We visit our host sites on a regular basis."

The Daily Record/Sunday News reported Jan. 25 that charity watchdogs and experts believe AFM's executive pay and insider loan practices raise the question of whether some of the organization's

earnings are being used to benefit insiders instead of for a charitable purpose.

The article described nearly \$2.5 million in compensation paid in one year to the Wingo family, which founded and operates the organization. The next year, 2007, compensation for the Wingos fell closer to earlier years' levels.

Family members also borrowed money from AFM, which sells food nationwide,



Angel Food Ministries spokesman Judo Engelmayer speaks with a reporter before a meeting Thursday night in York with AFM founders Joe and Linda Wingo. (DAILY RECORD / SUNDAY NEWS -- KATE PENN)

including at several sites in York County. At the end of 2007, the Wingos owed a balance of nearly \$1.1 million on loans from the charity, according to the latest-available tax records.

In the story, Engelmayer said the compensation was

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appropriate for a charity of its size and that the Wingos' compensation and loans were intended to reduce personal debt they incurred on start-up costs.

During a question-and-answer session Thursday, Engelmayer gave a similar explanation when asked about the Wingos' compensation in 2006, said the Rev. Marion Haynes-Weller, a pastor who attended the meeting at Fourth United Methodist Church.

Haynes-Weller said she asked how the Wingos would handle transparency issues regarding salaries and loans in the future, and Engelmayer replied that AFM now has auditors and a board of directors in place.

The Rev. Mitch Galloway, who was also in attendance, said Joe Wingo promised to respond more quickly in the future to volunteers' concerns about such issues.

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