



Saint Louis County

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
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Arrest and new charges in sex trafficking case

The St. Louis County Attorney's Office has filed charges of Aiding and Abetting Sex Trafficking in the First Degree against Tabbatha Lee Olson (8/11/1990) after a multi-agency, coordinated investigation. Those involved included the Duluth Police Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation with cooperation from the Fargo and Grand Forks, North Dakota, and Eau Claire, Wisconsin police departments. Others involved in this multilevel effort included the Porter County Sheriff's Office, Indiana, and Grand Forks County Sheriff's Office, North Dakota. A parallel indictment was issued in United States District Court against Markeace Arque Canty (8/23/1980). Both Olson and Canty have been apprehended.

The charges allege that Canty and Olson jointly solicited and promoted the prostitution of multiple juvenile females from the Duluth, Minnesota, area. The charges further allege that Canty and Olson used internet advertising to arranging for prostitution of the minors in multiple cities throughout the Midwest and then transported the minors to those locations.

According to County Attorney Mark Rubin, "Our highest priority is to intervene and assure the safety of victims who have been exploited through trafficking. It is our obligation and duty to protect the victims from continuing danger. It is a sad reality that sometimes adult women are used by traffickers to solicit and arrange for the exploitation of young girls. The situation that the adult women find themselves in would be appropriately considered at the sentencing phase. However, the conduct is not excusable and they must face responsibility for their actions."

Duluth Trafficking Task Force Coordinator Shunu Shrestha said in response to the arrests; "We applaud the work of the Duluth Police Department, Federal authorities, and the St. Louis County Attorney's Office in responding to this case. We further appreciate the systems' recognition of the need for advocacy to play a role in these cases and the cooperation they have shown with the Duluth Trafficking Task Force."

County Attorneys Jon Holets (218-726-2323) and Vicky Wanta will be prosecuting the case against Olson.

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