



## Department of Investigation

### *Press Releases*

### *Manhattan District Attorney - New York County*

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 1, 2000 - - Manhattan District Attorney Robert M. Morgenthau announced today the indictment of two New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) employees for stealing more than \$200,000 in user fees from the agency. New York City Department of Investigation (DOI) Commissioner Edward J. Kuriansky, whose agency conducted the investigation, joined the District Attorney.

SANDRA PERALTA, 30, a Recreation Specialist at the Asser Levy Recreation Center, is charged in one indictment with Grand Larceny in the Second Degree and four counts each of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree. The indictment alleges that from August 1, 1997 to December 31, 1999, PERALTA deposited thousands of \$25 checks and money orders in membership fees intended for DPR into an account she opened in a New Jersey Bank. PERALTA deposited more than \$200,000 in checks and money orders made out to the "City Parks Foundation" into the account which she controlled. The defendant had access to the checks and money orders because her duties included registration of new Asser Levy Recreation Center members and receipt and deposit of checks or money orders. PERALTA falsified daily transaction logs to conceal the theft. She omitted the names of the registrants whose check and money orders she had stolen from the daily information log.

JAMES HENDERSON, 60, a DRP Recreation Director at Asser Levy Recreation Center, is charged in a separate indictment with one count of Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and four counts each of Criminal Possession of a Forged Instrument in the Second Degree and Falsifying Business Records in the First Degree. It is alleged that from January 1, 1999 to December 31, 1999 HENDERSON stole more than \$5000 from the agency. He stole the money by filling in his own name as "payee" instead of the "City Parks Foundation" on numerous \$25 money orders intended as membership fees and depositing them into his own account. HENDERSON falsified daily transaction logs by omitting the names of the registrants whose money orders he had stolen.

Manhattan District Attorney Morgenthau said, "Twenty-five dollars may seem like an insignificant sum. However, this case demonstrates how quickly the theft of a small amount can add up to a substantial larceny. That is why it is imperative to enforce a zero tolerance policy for those corrupt employees who steal from the City. Most City employees are hardworking and honest. But, those who are not should know that they will be caught and prosecuted.

DOI Commissioner Kuriansky said, "The Parks employees used the Rec Center's cash register as their own personal piggy bank. Their arrest today should make it crystal clear that these centers are intended solely for the recreational use and enjoyment of the public - and not for the selfish interest of a corrupt few."

New York City Department of Parks and Recreation Commissioner Henry J. Stern, whose office initially referred the allegations to DOI, said, "The theft of funds from a recreation center depriving the children who play there of wholesome activities, is particularly callous. Stealing from kids is pathetic."

Grand Larceny in the Second Degree is a class C felony which is punishable by up to 15 years in state prison upon conviction. Grand Larceny in the Third Degree and Criminal Possession of a Forged a Instrument in the Second Degree are class D felonies punishable by up to seven years in state prison upon conviction. Falsifying Business Records in First Degree is a class E felony and carries a maximum four-year prison term upon conviction.

For their assistance with the investigation Mr. Morgenthau extended his thanks to: DOI Assistant Commissioner and Inspector General for DPR Vincent E. Green, and members of his staff, including Deputy Inspector General Theresa Land-Latta and Assistant Inspector General Pamela Woolbright; DOI Investigative Audit Unit, in particular, Deputy Chief Auditor Joan Russell-Benjamin and Investigative Auditor Luz Polanco.

The case was presented to the grand jury by Assistant District Attorney Joanne Siegmund of the Special Prosecutions Bureau, under the supervision of Bureau Chief, Leroy Frazer.