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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THREE INDICTED BY GRAND JURY FOLLOWING
INVESTIGATION INTO MEMPHIS ANIMAL SHELTER

FORMER SHELTER ADMINISTRATOR, SUPERVISOR, VETERINARIAN
FACE AGGRAVATED ANIMAL CRUELTY CHARGES



Angela Middleton



Tina Quattlebaum

MEMPHIS, TN – Shelby County District Attorney Bill Gibbons and Shelby County Sheriff Mark H. Luttrell, Jr. announced Friday that three individuals who were responsible for running the City of Memphis Animal Shelter have been indicted by the state grand jury for Shelby County on multiple charges of aggravated animal cruelty. The indictments are the result of an investigation into alleged animal abuse and cruelty at the shelter, located at 3456 Tchulahoma Road. District Attorney Gibbons requested the Sheriff's Office investigation last October after receiving a tip from a citizen on the conditions at the shelter.

The grand jury indicted former shelter administrator **Ernest Alexander**; former shelter supervisor **Tina Quattlebaum**; and veterinarian **Angela Middleton**. **Each defendant has been indicted on six counts of aggravated animal cruelty, a class E felony.** The standard sentencing range

for a class E felony is 1-2 years in prison. However, under Tennessee law, the defendants could possibly receive judicial diversion if convicted of the crimes.

Alexander is not in custody at this time, but the sheriff's office is requesting the public's help in locating him. If a citizen has any information on the location of Alexander, they should call the Shelby County Sheriff's Fugitive Division at 901-545-5625.

Shelby County Sheriff's deputies took Quattlebaum and Middleton into custody Thursday evening. Both have been released from the Shelby County Jail on \$25,000 bond.

The indictments allege the crimes were committed against three separate animals between

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August 5, 2009 and September 10, 2009. While not commenting specifically on the evidence, Gibbons stressed that prosecutors intend to show a broad pattern of cruelty to animals. "The three incidents cited in the indictments are specifically ones in which special autopsies were performed on the animals," Gibbons said. The indictments say the defendants "did unlawfully and intentionally, with aggravated cruelty" cause "serious physical injury" and "death" to a companion animal.

As part of the investigation, Sheriff's deputies executed a search warrant at the animal shelter. According to the search warrant, "detectives have learned that some animals have been deprived of food and water while at the Memphis Animal Shelter..." and while in the shelter's care, "some dogs have been starved to the point of requiring euthanasia." According to the search warrant, some of the dogs "are involved in court cases involving dog fighting and have been marked 'Hold for Court.'" Additionally, the warrant says that shelter employees keep "dogs that are to be quarantined for rabies with dogs that are not required to be quarantined in the same kennel."

"This is a very disturbing case. The defendants were public employees hired not only to provide a service to the citizens of Memphis but to care for and treat animals brought to the shelter. We intend to hold them responsible for violating the law," said Gibbons. "I commend the detectives in the Sheriff's office and the prosecutors assisting them who have combed through countless documents and physical evidence during this investigation," he added. Gibbons noted also that the indictments are a prime example of how a tip from a concerned citizen can prompt an investigation and subsequent prosecution.

Assistant District Attorneys Dan Byer and Bobby Carter Byer are prosecuting this case.

"This case has not only tested our ability as a law enforcement agency to follow up on the allegations of animal cruelty but to respond to the concerns of people interested in this case from all over the world," said Sheriff Luttrell. "This was indeed, a very complex case. Besides allegations of animal cruelty, our detectives had to look at almost every aspect in the operations of the animal shelter to follow

up on leads and document evidence. Our investigators have spent hundreds of hours conducting interviews and reviewing thousands of office documents needed for this case,” he said.

Catherine Desteza, an experienced animal investigator with ASPCA (American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals), and Dr. Melinda Merck, DVM, Senior Director of Veterinary Forensic Services for ASPCA, assisted the Sheriff’s office with the investigation. Both women were involved in the dog fighting investigation that led to the 2007 indictment of NFL player Michael Vick.

The American Humane Association provided care for the animals inside the shelter while it was temporarily secured by sheriff’s deputies during the investigation.

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