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Office of the Inspector General
Miami-Dade County

Memorandum

To: The Hon. Mayor Alex Penelas, Miami-Dade County

The Hon. Dr. Barbara Carey-Shuler, Chair
and Members of the Board of County Commissioners

The Hon. Harvey Ruvlin, Clerk of the Courts

From: Christopher Mazzella,
Inspector General

Date: December 11, 2002

Re: Teen Court Program Arrest

Attached please find a news release issued by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) relative to the arrest of the former Director of the Teen Court Program, Ralph McCloud. McCloud was charged with two counts of Unlawful Compensation for receiving approximately \$30,237.00 in kickbacks, while he served as the Director, from a Teen Court Program vendor. As you know, this program is County funded.

cc: Mr. Steve Shiver, County Manager
Mr. Vincent Brown, Director – Metro-Miami Action Plan

Clerk of the Board (Copy Filed)

NEWS RELEASE

Former Miami-Dade Official Arrested in Kickback Scheme

The former Miami-Dade County Teen Court Director was arrested today for taking cash kickbacks from a County vendor. Chris Mazzella, Inspector General for Miami-Dade County, stated that Ralph McCloud, age 48, a Miami resident, was arrested after the culmination of a year long investigation by the Office of Inspector General and the Dade County State Attorneys Office. The investigation revealed that McCloud, while serving as Director of the Teen Court, received approximately \$30,237 in cash kickbacks in exchange for awarding consulting contracts.

Teen Court is a juvenile justice court diversionary program that serves as an alternative to delinquency prosecution in juvenile court. The program is designed to provide in house rehabilitative seminars and training classes. Most juveniles referred to the program are first time offenders who are charged with misdemeanors. The Teen Court Program receives approximately \$1.5 million annually, in public money, including special assessments for court costs imposed by county ordinance, which are administered through the Metro-Miami Action Plan (MMAP), a community partnership sponsored by Miami-Dade County, the City of Miami and the Miami-Dade Public Schools. As part of its contribution to MMAP, the City of Miami assigned McCloud, who was a City of Miami employee, to MMAP as a Program Director of the Martin Luther King Academy. In the late 1990's, MMAP created and implemented the Teen Court Program and named McCloud the Teen Court Director.

According to an affidavit filed by a Special Agent of the Office of Inspector General (OIG), in January 2000, MMAP awarded a consulting contract to Patricia Johnson to provide training services to the Teen Court. Her program was called "Armed for Success: A Practical Approach to Self Development." MMAP awarded this contract to Johnson based upon McCloud's referral and recommendation. Unbeknownst to MMAP, McCloud had a hidden business relationship with Johnson. McCloud and Johnson utilized the fictitious name of "Machue and Associates, Education Consultants," as the supposed creator and distributor of the Armed for Success training materials. MMAP paid a total of \$45,475 to Johnson for her consulting services and she kicked back approximately \$22,735 of these proceeds to McCloud in cash.

The Affidavit further states that on June 15, 2001, Johnson was awarded a second consulting contract in the amount of \$45,000 to provide the "Armed for Success" program to the Teen Court. Johnson was paid \$15,000 by MMAP for implementing the training services, approximately half of which (\$7,500) was kicked back to McCloud in cash.

Based upon the investigation. McCloud has been charged with two counts of Unlawful Compensation and, if convicted, faces up to ten years imprisonment and a \$10,000 fine. The State Attorneys Office recommended that McCloud be held in custody in lieu of \$10,000 bond.

Patricia Johnson is presently charged by information with receiving Unlawful Compensation, a third degree felony, which carries a maximum term of five years imprisonment. Pursuant to a plea agreement, Johnson entered the Pre-Trial Intervention Program and is bound to comply with certain conditions. Most notably, Johnson must cooperate fully with the Office of Inspector General, pay \$3,000.00 in investigative costs, and make a public apology to MMAP, the Miami-Dade Teen Court Program, and the citizens of Miami-Dade County. If she complies with the conditions of this plea agreement, the State Attorney will Nolle Prose the charges lodged against her.

In commenting on the transgressions perpetrated by the defendants, the Inspector General stated that he was extremely distressed that the top official of the Teen Court Program that focuses on saving juveniles would stoop to unethical, corrupt conduct that tarnished the program and placed it in peril. Mr. Mazzella praised MMAP for instituting aggressive internal accounting mechanisms that detected this alleged crime and for expeditiously bringing it to the attention of the Inspector General's Office.

Vincent Brown, Director of MMAP, expressed his appreciation for the aggressive response to the alleged criminal conduct his office detected and he vowed to continue reviewing programs funded by MMAP diligently. He stressed that with the filing of criminal charges against McCloud and Johnson, the Teen Court Program has become an even stronger, more viable tool to combat juvenile delinquency.