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**Two State Employees among Three Accused of Using State Agency Credit Cards
in Theft of Thousands of Dollars of Gasoline**

Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota and New York State Inspector General Kristine Hamann today announced the arrest of three individuals, including two State employees, on charges they stole gasoline through the unauthorized use of credit cards issued to New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD) facilities in Dix Hills, New York.

Sean Marshall, 23, and Omer Hanley, 22, both OMRDD Developmental Aides, and 31-year-old Taiwana Knight, who detectives identified as Marshall's girlfriend, will be charged with Fourth Degree Grand Larceny this afternoon in First District Court in Central Islip. All three defendants reside in Wyandanch. Fourth Degree Grand Larceny is a class E felony punishable by a maximum prison term of one and one-third to four years.

The arrests culminate a nine-month investigation that began when OMRDD reported to the State Inspector General's Office that an OMRDD audit had identified a number of questionable gasoline purchases, beginning in July 2006, made with New York State government vehicle credit cards issued to community residential facilities operated by OMRDD in Dix Hills. The facilities house developmentally disabled and mentally retarded individuals, and is administered by OMRDD's regional office in Commack.

OMRDD's facilities operate State vehicles to transport residents to day programs and for other facility-related purposes. Each vehicle is assigned a State-issued credit card for authorized gasoline and maintenance purchases. When using the cards, OMRDD employees must enter a personal identification number (PIN) that allows the transaction to proceed and identifies them as the employee making the purchase.

A number of gasoline purchases made with credit cards assigned to state vehicles raised suspicions because they used PINs that had been assigned to employees who no

longer worked at OMRDD or who had been transferred. Additionally, transactions had occurred at times the vehicles normally would not be in use, and in some instances the purchases were for premium grades of gasoline that State vehicles do not use.

Investigators installed surveillance equipment to record numerous unauthorized gasoline purchases allegedly being made by Marshall, Hanley, and Knight.

In all, investigators believe as much as \$19,000 to \$20,000 in unauthorized and illegal gasoline purchases were made by individuals currently under investigation. The probe is continuing and additional arrests are possible.

“The evidence in this investigation shows state workers betraying taxpayers dozens of times by abusing their gasoline credit card privileges,” District Attorney Spota said. “These thefts were discovered by OMRDD and I commend their investigators for their effective monitoring of gasoline purchase records that provided the initial information that led to this investigation.”

Inspector General Hamann stated: “The criminal acts that are alleged in this case not only violate the law, but, with respect to two of the defendants, betray the trust we place in our public employees. It is even more disturbing that the thefts targeted OMRDD resources that are intended for programs that assist individuals who have been entrusted to our care.”

Diana Jones Ritter, OMRDD’s new Commissioner, said: “As Commissioner of OMRDD I will be ever vigilant against fraud and will continue to work collaboratively with the Inspector General and others to assure taxpayers that funds are used appropriately. Accountability at all levels is key to assuring that people with developmental disabilities receive quality care. Individuals who violate the law and take advantage of the public trust must be held accountable for their actions.”

Inspector General Hamann also stated that her Office would be making recommendations to OMRDD for improving the security of vehicle credit cards and the review of credit card purchases.

For additional information, contact Robert Clifford of the Suffolk County District Attorney’s Office at (631) 853-4118 or Stephen Del Giacco of the State Inspector General’s Office at (518) 474-1010.