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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY  
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**



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**MCSO AND DRO announce final results of child support amnesty week and roundup**

Norristown, Pa., (June 26, 2013) – The Montgomery County Sheriff's Department and Domestic Relations Office reported the final results of the weeklong delinquent child support amnesty program and the intense roundup of defendants with bench warrants that followed, during a press conference at the Montgomery County Courthouse.

During amnesty week, which ended on June 14<sup>th</sup> at 4:15 p.m., 45 defendants were able to get their warrants revoked by turning themselves in and paying \$1,269 down on a total of \$704,061 owed in back child support. Seventy children benefited from the funds received by the court, and the court orders to continue payments on their behalf.

The goal of the DRO was to resolve 10 percent of the outstanding 300 warrants during amnesty week and pick up a handful of defendants during the sweep. A total of 74 defendants were seen over the course of the two-week period to account for almost 25 percent of all outstanding bench warrants for delinquent child support.

Not all cases resulted in court hearings or jail time.

“Two plaintiffs were able to close their cases pretty quickly. Both plaintiffs forgave the defendants’ arrears in order to close their cases,” Rebecca Colantuno, Domestic Relations Office Enforcement Unit Assistant Director said.

Voluntary respondents during the amnesty period included two of the DRO's Most Wanted for Delinquent Child Support, Daniel Darden and Eric Homa. A defendant with two outstanding criminal

warrants said he wanted to take care of his kids by resolving child support issues despite the risk of jail time. Another defendant took advantage of work release and found a job working on the roof of county offices to pay his obligations.

Sheriff Eileen Whalon Behr said she attributed the success of the program to community involvement and was also very thankful for the increased media attention.

“The departments received dozens of tips via the county’s TIP LINE and through the online ‘Submit a Tip’ form as a result of the significant media coverage,” Behr said. “We will continue to actively pursue the remaining outstanding warrants with the continuous help from tips and media focus.”

Behr also thanked Montgomery County Common Pleas Judge Rhonda Daniele for clearing a week of her schedule to hear the cases, hand down contempt orders and assign purge payments to the defendants.

Following the amnesty period and starting June 17<sup>th</sup> at 2 a.m., deputies started a sweep of defendants with outstanding bench warrants. Using tips and increased law enforcement, deputies were able to pick up more than one defendant per hour, resulting in a total of 28 defendants ready to appear before Judge Daniele five hours later.

The highest court-ordered purge amount set by Judge Daniele was paid by defendant Jason Ziegler in the amount of \$7,000.

A total of \$19,119 was collected during the week of roundups which was paid towards the \$289,436 in support arrears for 39 children. The sweep also uncovered a defendant suspected of drug possession and others who had outstanding warrants in other counties.

Colantuno said she was very pleased with the results of the program and how her staff worked with defendants to reach total resolution.

“These results were three times higher than the amnesty program in 2009,” Colantuno said.

Anonymous tips may be reported by calling the Sheriff Department’s TIP LINE at 610-278-3340 or by filling out the online “Submit a Tip” form at [www.montcopa.org/FormCenter/Sheriffs-department-8/Submit-a-Tip-45](http://www.montcopa.org/FormCenter/Sheriffs-department-8/Submit-a-Tip-45), or by sending an email to [sheriffwarrant@montcopa.org](mailto:sheriffwarrant@montcopa.org).

The "Domestic Relations Most Wanted for Child Support" list is available at [www.montcopa.org/sheriff](http://www.montcopa.org/sheriff) by clicking on the link "Wanted Persons."

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