



Riverside County District Attorney
NEWS RELEASE

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**DA ROD PACHECO ANNOUNCES ARREST
OF OWNERS OF T-TOWN GROUP HOMES**

RIVERSIDE: Today, Tuesday, June 1, 2010, District Attorney Rod Pacheco announced the arrest as a result of an investigation by the District Attorney's Office of Purcell Johnson (DOB 10/15/1959) and Laverne Johnson (DOB 12/31/1962), both of Riverside, owners of T-Town Group Homes. The investigation relates to suspected misappropriation of funds and theft under the operation of their business.

The defendants owned and operated T-Town Group Homes, a foster care agency catering to boys from age 13-17 in Perris, Banning, Yucaipa and Beaumont. From 2004-2008, the couple accepted placement of 89 foster children and received \$5,613 per child, per month from the Riverside County Department of Public Social Services intended to go toward the needs of the children under their care. In the course of those four years, the defendants misappropriated hundreds of thousands of dollars meant for those children. In addition, the defendants were overpaid in excess of \$230,000 by the Department of Public Social Services and still owe \$190,000 of that amount, despite several notifications, they have continually failed to repay those funds.

Documents show that the defendants' spent the money in a myriad of places, including paying for gym memberships, dinners at expensive fine-dining restaurants, and at nail salons. The money being spent at these establishments was taken from T-Town's business accounts rather than the defendants' personal accounts. They also made several payments on their personal vehicles, a 2002 Cadillac Escalade and a 2005 Land Rover Discovery, using the misappropriated funds. Further, it was discovered that the defendants frequently wrote checks from these accounts either to themselves or simply made them out to "cash." Over a five year span, these withdrawals exceeded \$240,000, above and beyond what they were purportedly taking in salaries from their business.

"These people were entrusted to care for those children who have it the hardest," District Attorney Rod Pacheco said. "Instead, the defendants took money meant to feed, clothe, and house these kids and spent it selfishly."

The investigation was generated when a discrepancy was initially discovered by the Riverside County Auditor-Controller's Office and referred to the District Attorney's Office for investigation.

Supervising Deputy District Attorney Deborah Lucky and Deputy District Attorney Timothy Cross are prosecuting the case.

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