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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**D.A. BROWN: COLLEGE POINT WOMAN SENTENCED TO THREE YEARS  
IN PRISON FOR DEFRAUDING TWO ELDERLY WOMEN OUT OF \$245,000**  
*Used Money to Buy Auto and Block Island Property and Start Carrot Cake Business*

Queens District Attorney Richard A. Brown announced today that a College Point woman who admitted stealing more than \$245,000 in savings from two women in their nineties has been sentenced to one to three years in state prison. In addition, she has made partial restitution to the victims and has signed a confession of judgment for the balance.

District Attorney Brown said, "The defendant's acts of kindness were, in reality, acts of greed that robbed her victims of substantial sums of money that they had saved for their retirement. Crimes against the elderly – whether they involve physical or, as in this case, financial harm – are despicable because the victims are so vulnerable. That is why I established an Elder Abuse Unit in my office to go after such predators. Those efforts and today's sentence will hopefully go a long way in deterring others from preying upon our senior population and will result in restitution to the victims."

The District Attorney identified the defendant as Patricia Murtaugh, 58, of 40-25 College Point Boulevard in College Point, Queens. She pleaded guilty on July 26, 2006 to second-degree grand larceny before Acting Supreme Court Justice Pauline Mullings who imposed an indeterminate sentence of one to three years in prison. At sentencing yesterday, the defendant also made partial restitution of \$5,000 to the victims.

District Attorney Brown said that, according to the charges, the defendant was hired by 90-year-old Joan Coughlan, of Manhattan, to assist her in cataloging and filing her deceased brother's possessions. At the time, Ms. Coughlan had three accounts at the Emigrant Savings Bank with amounts totaling more than \$300,000. Between December 16, 2004, and March 3, 2005, three checks totaling \$9,400 were drawn on these accounts and made payable to the defendant. On March 18, 2005, the defendant – without the knowledge or permission of Ms. Coughlan – opened up a joint account at a Chase Manhattan Bank in Queens in both their names and, between March 18, 2005, and August 12, 2005, transferred more than \$150,000 from Ms. Coughlan's Emigrant accounts to the joint Chase account. Thereafter, the defendant withdrew the entire transferred amount from the Chase account by way of cashier checks, personal checks, teller withdrawals and debit purchases made on the account.

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The District Attorney said that the defendant also befriended 94-year-old Elizabeth Shanks, of the Bronx, and offered to assist her with paying her bills and that, in order to make it easier for the defendant to help her, she obtained from the victim a power of attorney. On May 4, 2005 – unbeknownst to Ms. Shanks and without her permission – the defendant opened up a joint account at a Queens Chase Manhattan Bank branch in both their names. Five days later, on May 10, 2005, the defendant transferred approximately \$137,000 from Shanks' Citibank account – again without Shanks' knowledge or permission – to the Chase account and thereafter withdrew \$85,000 from the Chase account by means of cashier checks, personal checks, teller withdrawals and wire transfers.

The District Attorney said that based on a review of subpoenaed records it appears that the defendant used some of the money to purchase a Ford automobile, pay rent on her apartment, make a down payment on a house on Block Island in Rhode Island and open a carrot cake business on Block Island.

The Queens District Attorney's Elder Abuse Unit was established in 1994 and is staffed by New York State licensed social workers and student interns. The Unit's goal is to work with Queens County senior citizens who have been the victims of abuse, neglect or criminal activity and help them get the support and services necessary to restore their safety, health and quality of life. Such victims are offered counseling – in their homes or in the Unit's office – assistance with the court system, community and criminal justice advocacy, information about appropriate social services, referrals to community agencies and programs, and assistance with New York State Crime Victims compensation claims. The Unit also provides training for seniors, professionals and community groups on elder abuse, prevention and safety issues.

Detectives Evelyn Alegre and Ketty Larco, of the District Attorney's Detective Squad, conducted the investigation under the supervision of Sergeant John Kenna, Lieutenant Robert Burke and the overall supervision of Chief Lawrence J. Festa and Deputy Chief Albert D. Velardi. Social Worker Laurie K. Woods, of the District Attorney's Elder Abuse Unit, and Senior Forensic Accountant James J. Dever of the District Attorney's Economic Crimes Bureau, also assisted in the investigation.

Assistant District Attorney Gregory C. Pavlides, Chief of District Attorney Brown's Economic Crimes Bureau, prosecuted the case under the supervision of Executive Assistant District Attorney for Investigations Peter A. Crusco and Deputy Executive Assistant District Attorney Linda M. Cantoni.

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**Note to Editors: Press release e-version posted at [www.queensda.org](http://www.queensda.org).**