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NEWS RELEASE

Date: July 15, 2003
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Director of Communications

**District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham Sells Forfeited Drug Property for \$1.00 to
Community Group**

Students Will Use Former Cocaine House To Learn Building And Construction Trades

WHAT: Press Conference
WHEN: Tuesday July 15, 2003
11AM
WHERE: 427 McClellan St, South Philadelphia (Map Book p. 37, H-4. See directions below.)

District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham today sold for \$1.00 a former drug house to a community group that will use the house as a 'living workshop' to teach high school students the building and construction trades.

"I am delighted that these properties will be used as an investment in this neighborhood and especially in the futures of our young adults," said the district attorney.

The students are enrolled in an after-school Construction Club, "Home Repair and Construction," which aims to turn out young apprentices in the fields of electrical work, carpentry, sheet-rock hanging, plumbing and other trades. The courses are offered at Bok Vocational High School, which has been named a Beacon School. Beacon schools remain open after 3pm in order to offer special programs such as this one.

Sunrise of Philadelphia, Inc., is the non-profit organization that runs the rehab program. The district attorney will sell the property to Sunrise of Philadelphia, Inc. for the sum of \$1.00. Sunrise will use the house as a workshop to teach the practical end of the trades in a 'learn-by-doing' situation. Sunrise agrees that renovation of the premises shall begin within six months and that the property may not be sold or transferred within three years.

Based on numerous community complaints about increasing drug activity at 427 McClellan St., South Narcotics Field Unit began investigating the property in September, 2002. Thereafter, an undercover South Narcotics officer, using a confidential informant, bought cocaine powder from 427 McClellan St from 9/16/02 through 9/25/02 at various times. On 9/25/02, officers executed a search and seizure warrant at the property and arrested ROBERT NICOLETTI, DOB 8/9/68. Nicoletti was arrested inside attempting to discard a Tupperware container, which contained a large amount of cocaine powder. Recovered inside of 427 McClellan St. were one scale with residue, one stapler with residue, one light green candle holder with residue, one plastic baggie with residue, one 22-caliber long rifle loaded with one round in the chamber and four rounds in the magazine. The bullets were SUPER X, which are high-velocity rounds. The total amount of cocaine from this property was approximately one ounce with a street value of approximately \$3000. Nicoletti has been held for trial on drug charges and related offenses.

The District Attorney's Public Nuisance Task Force then filed a petition for forfeiture of 427 McClellan St, and a judge ordered the property forfeited in March, 2003.

On Christmas Eve 2002, the district attorney turned over to two community groups two former drug houses---one in Grays Ferry at 160 S. Newkirk St and another in West Philadelphia at 748 N. 43. The groups are turning those properties into centers for job skills training, GED classes, antidrug services and literacy programs.

Notes to reporters and editors: Confirmed participants are: District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham, four students who will rehab the house and their teacher, Jerry Pikunas; Loretta Crea, CFO, Sunrise of Philadelphia; Janet DeGiovanni, Executive Director, Whitman Council; Chief Inspector William Blackburn, Philadelphia Police Narcotics Bureau; Deputy District Attorney Joseph Whitehead; Assistant District Attorney Mark Moore.

Also invited: Mayor John Street; IBEW Local 98 President John Dougherty; Councilmember Frank DiCicco; State Rep. William Keller.

Directions to 427 McClellan Street

From City Hall

Traveling South on Broad Street, turn left onto Washington Avenue. Turn Right onto S. 6th Street and then Left onto Pierce Street. Turn Right onto S. 4th Street and Right onto McClellan Street. (approximately 2.5 miles from City Hall to 427 McClellan Street)

From I-76 West (City Line)

Traveling East on I-76, merge onto I-676 East, and then merge onto I-95 South. Take the Columbus Boulevard exit (exit number 20. exit is on the left) and turn right onto S. Columbus Boulevard. Turn Right onto Tasker Street and Left onto S. 4th Street. Turn Right onto McClellan Street. (approximately 1.7 miles from I-95 to 427 McClellan Street)

