



LYNNE ABRAHAM
DISTRICT ATTORNEY

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1421 ARCH STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102**

NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Cathie Abookire / 215-686-8711
Director of Communications

Financial Crime Investigators Name Assistant District Attorney Mary-Ellen Walter
"Prosecutor of the Year"

WHAT PRESS CONFERENCE

WHEN TUESDAY AUGUST 5, 2003
10 AM

WHERE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1421 ARCH ST.
FIRST FLOOR PRESS ROOM

PARTICIPANTS

1. District Attorney Lynne Abraham
2. Assistant District Attorney Mary-Ellen Walter, Chief of the Drug Forfeiture Unit
3. Henry Herrera, U.S Postal Inspector, Philadelphia Division and IAFCI Delaware Valley Chapter President
4. Lt. Gene Cummings, Philadelphia Police Major Crimes Unit
5. Det. Jerry Brennan, Philadelphia Police Major Crimes Unit
6. Bob Bankhead, U.S. Postal Inspector, Philadelphia Division

August 5, 2003----The International Association of Financial Crimes Investigators today names Assistant District Attorney Mary-Ellen Walter, Chief of the District Attorney's Drug Forfeiture Unit, their Prosecutor of the Year.

Mary-Ellen Walter has prosecuted countless crimes involving scams and fraud, including several high-profile cases, such as the Andrew Bassaner Guess Who's Moving case and the Rickie Williams house-stealing cases. ADA Walter prosecuted these cases and successfully obtained more than \$1-million in restitution for the victims of these crimes. Bassaner, who overcharged some 200 customers and then kept their furniture, is serving a 2 to 4 year work-release sentence with 21 years probation, and Williams was in May, 2003 sentenced to 10 to 20 years for stealing peoples houses and ruining the lives of at least 75 victims.

Today, IAFCI Delaware Valley Chapter President Herrera will present ADA Walter with a plaque containing the IAFCI logo and the Inscription, " Prosecutor of the Year, presented to Mary- Ellen Walter, Assistant District Attorney Philadelphia PA, in recognition of your outstanding prosecutions involving financial crimes within the tri-state area, the Delaware Valley Chapter of IAFCI".

ADA Walter was nominated because of her prosecutorial excellence in general, as exemplified by her work on one particular massive bank fraud scheme that prompted the U.S. Postal Inspectors to nominate Mary- Ellen for the award.

Beginning late 1999 through April 2001, U.S. Postal Inspectors and Philadelphia Police executed several operations which resulted in the individual arrests of Nefertiti Randall, Brandon James, LaMech James, Quiana James, Shanta Henderson, and Crystal Gilliard. The investigation ultimately disclosed that these defendants, led by Randall, obtained the personal identifiers and credit card account numbers of people from all over the United States. The defendants used this information to operate an account takeover/fraud application scheme. Approximately \$250,000 in losses were identified. An overview of this scheme was presented to the Economic Crimes Unit of the Philadelphia District Attorney's office.

ADA Walter was assigned to the case in May 2001. Her first action was to meet with the case agent to get a first hand account and understanding of the investigation. As a result, ADA Walter oversaw the drafting of a new affidavit for arrest warrants which outlined the full scope of the case. Randall was identified as the ringleader with each of the other defendants as conspirators. She then orchestrated the withdrawal of the individual cases and had each defendant arrested and charged as co-defendants by authority of the newly obtained warrants.

Shortly thereafter, the facts of the case were presented to the U.S. Attorney's Office. The U.S. Attorney agreed to adopt the case. ADA Walter was designated as a Special Assistant U.S. Attorney and continued on as the lead prosecutor.

During the fall of 2001, ADA Walter organized and participated in proffer sessions with several defendants.

During January 2002, U.S. Postal Inspectors and Philadelphia Police collected evidence that Randall was continuing the scheme. ADA Walter approved an affidavit for an arrest warrant for Randall. Randall was arrested on January 23, 2002 and provided a statement admitting her continued fraud activity.

During early 2002, ADA Walter conducted federal Grand Jury hearings in this case. This resulted in indictments for all six defendants charging conspiracy, bank fraud and aiding and abetting. Guilty pleas were ultimately entered by each defendant.

ADA Walter argued for the prosecution at each of the sentencing hearings held during October and November 2002.

- Nefertiti Randall was sentenced to 37 months prison, five years probation and restitution.

- Brandon James was sentenced to 18 months prison, five years probation and restitution.

- LaMech James was sentenced to eight months prison, five years probation and restitution.

- Quiana James was sentenced to one day in prison, four months house arrest, five years probation and restitution.

-Shanta Henderson was sentenced to four months prison, four months house arrest, five years probation and restitution.

-Crystal Gilliard was sentenced to two months prison, four months house arrest, five years probation and restitution.

Randall was sentenced on November 13, 2002. Despite strong argument from the prosecution, the judge granted her 30 days for surrender. On November 19, U.S. Postal Inspectors and Philadelphia Police obtained evidence that Randall had been active in her scheme since her sentencing date. ADA Walter was contacted and authorized Randall's arrest on state charges. Randall was arrested that evening. Fraud documentation was recovered at the scene, including a fraudulently obtained Visa card. On November 21, 2002, Randall was released to federal custody. She was immediately taken before her sentencing judge who revoked the 30 day stay of sentencing. Randall was taken from the courtroom to begin her 37 month incarceration.

Throughout the progression of this case, ADA Walter displayed a willingness to fully understand the case, to work in concert with investigators, and to take decisive and appropriate actions. In short, the work of ADA Walter in this case was exemplary and made her a very worthy nominee for the I.A.F.C.I. Prosecutor of the Year.

The nominations for each chapter winner of Prosecutor of the Year are reviewed by members of the International Board. From the chapter winners, selections are made for International Prosecutor of the Year awards.

ADA Walter has been selected as the winner of the 2nd place IAFCI International Prosecutor of the Year award. Presentation of this award is scheduled for August 28, 2003 in Arlington TX during the IAFCI Annual Training Conference.

ADA Walter began her tenure with the District Attorney's Office as an intern in 1992 and started fulltime on August 7, 1993. She has worked in the Motions Unit, the Juvenile Unit and the Felony Waiver Unit. In 1996 she was transferred to the Local Intensive Narcotics Enforcement Unit (LINE, which is now Special Narcotics.) In January 2001 the district attorney promoted her to Assistant Chief of the Economic and Cyber Crime Unit. On March 4, 2003, District Attorney Abraham promoted her to Chief of the Drug Forfeiture Unit.