



News Release

Lexington County Sheriff James R. Metts, Ed.D.

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12:30 p.m. (For immediate release)

FOURTEEN DEADBEAT PARENTS ARRESTED OUTSIDE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

So far this year, investigators with the Lexington County Sheriff's Department Fugitive Unit have arrested 14 deadbeat parents who live outside of South Carolina on criminal arrest warrants for not making court-ordered child support payments in Lexington County. The 14 deadbeat parents owe a combined total of \$448,027 in court-ordered child support payments.

Lexington County Sheriff James R. Metts said fugitive investigators are scheduled to return one of the deadbeat parents, James Alan Rinehart, 49, of 190 Seminole Lane, Unit 403, Cocoa Beach, Fla., to the Lexington County Detention Center at 2:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 6. Lexington County Clerk of Court Beth Carrigg said Rinehart owes \$15,024 in unpaid, court-ordered child support payments in Lexington County.

The 14 deadbeat parents who have been arrested by the Fugitive Unit since January 1 have either been returned to Lexington County or are in the process of being returned to Lexington County in order to appear before a family court judge to resolve their nonpayment of court-ordered child support, Metts said.

"These arrests reflect the commitment of the Sheriff's Department and Clerk of Court's Office to track down deadbeat parents wherever they are," Metts said. "Deadbeat parents no longer can flee South Carolina in order evade making court-ordered child support payments."

Under South Carolina law, deadbeat parents can be charged with a criminal violation that carries a maximum penalty of one year in prison and a \$1,500 fine. That punishment can be imposed in addition to any penalty that a family court judge hands down for not paying court-ordered child support.

MORE....MORE....MORE

Metts and Carrigg said fugitive investigators generally obtain criminal arrest warrants for failure to pay child support when deadbeat parents habitually do not pay child support.

On February 28, 119 deadbeat parents turned themselves in and 38 deadbeat parents were arrested on family court bench warrants that were issued after the parents did not make court-ordered child support payments in Lexington County, Metts and Carrigg said. The Sheriff's Department and Clerk of Court's Office conducted Operation Last Chance on February 28 to provide 413 deadbeat parents with a final opportunity to turn themselves in on family court bench warrants that were issued in Lexington County.

Metts and Carrigg said the 157 deadbeat parents who were served with family court bench warrants on February 28 paid a total of \$87,058 in court-ordered child support payments. The two family court judges who heard cases on February 28 during Operation Last Chance re-established payment plans for deadbeat parents and took other actions to dispose of cases in which parents owed a combined total of \$1.7 million in court-ordered child support payments.

Operation Last Chance exceeded expectations, with 38 percent of the deadbeat parents who were wanted on family court bench warrants taken into custody, Metts and Carrigg said. The disposition on February 28 of \$1.7 million in court-ordered child support payments represents 28 percent of the combined total of \$6.1 million that was owed by the 413 deadbeat parents.

Metts and Carrigg said Operation Last Chance and the use of criminal arrest warrants for failure to pay child support reflect their zero tolerance policy concerning the failure of non-custodial parents to make court-ordered child support payments. In 2006, the Clerk of Court's Office collected \$16.4 million in court-ordered child support payments in Lexington County.

Metts and Carrigg have worked together to enhance the enforcement of court orders in child-support cases.

"This partnership has brought numerous delinquent parents to justice through hard work and dedication," Carrigg said. "We share a common desire to see all deadbeat parents apprehended in an effort to provide children in Lexington County with the court-ordered child-support payments that children deserve and need."

Information about deadbeat parents is available on the Sheriff's Department web site: www.lexingtonsheriff.com, Metts said. People anonymously can provide information about deadbeat parents through the web site's crime tip link, or by sending an e-mail to the Fugitive Unit (FTF@lex-co.com) or by calling the Fugitive Unit telephone hotline ([803-785-2534](tel:803-785-2534)).

NOTE: A color booking photograph of James Alan Rinehart can be transmitted by e-mail.