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## PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release on June 20, 2008

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### **D.A. DONOVAN: S.I. COUPLE ARRAIGNED ON MANSLAUGHTER INDICTMENT IN STARVATION DEATH OF 7-WEEK-OLD SON**

***\*\*\*Joanne Fezza, 42, & Peter Mason, 46, Charged in March 23<sup>rd</sup> Death of Matthew Mason \*\*\****

STATEN ISLAND, NY - Richmond County District Attorney Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. today announced that Joanne R. Fezza (DOB: 8/26/1965) and Peter J. Mason (DOB: 2/4/1962), of Oder Avenue, have been arraigned on charges of Manslaughter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> degree in relation to their roles in the March 23, 2008 death of their 7-week-old son, Matthew Mason (DOB: 2/1/2008). The defendants have also been charged with 4 misdemeanor counts of Endangering the Welfare of a Child, for failing to provide proper living conditions for Matthew and his 5-year-old surviving brother.

Matthew Mason was pronounced dead on March 23, 2008 at Staten Island University Hospital North where he was being treated after being found unresponsive by a relative inside his family's Oder Avenue home at approximately 9:00 a.m. Following an autopsy, the New York City Office of the Chief Medical Examiner determined that the death was as a result of acute bronchopneumonia brought about by starvation. The indictment alleges that the defendants recklessly caused the child's death by starving him and also endangered the welfare of Matthew Mason and his 5 year-old-brother by failing to provide adequate food and living conditions, specifically including but not limited to inadequate food in the home and unsanitary, filthy conditions in the kitchen and bathroom.

The defendants were arraigned on the indictment this morning before State Supreme Court Justice Leonard P. Rienzi and were ordered held on \$500,000 bail until their next court date on July 2, 2008. The top count of the indictment, Manslaughter in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree, a Class D felony, carries a maximum penalty of 15 years in prison.

The case against Joanne Fezza and Peter Mason is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Karen Varriale of the Sex Crimes/Special Victims Bureau under the supervision of Assistant District Attorney Yolanda L. Rudich, Bureau Chief. Joanne Fezza and Peter Mason are represented by Carol Siegel and Eugene Lamb, Esq. respectively.

The public is reminded that an indictment is merely an accusation, and that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.

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