

New York State

Racing and Wagering Board

**1 Broadway Center - Suite 600
Schenectady, NY 12305**

Phone: (518) 395-5400

www.racing.state.ny.us



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: JOE MAHONEY

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Cell - (518) 698-3879

Email: jmahoney@racing.state.ny.us

North Country Mom and Daughter Charged with Pilfering Charitable Gaming Funds

A joint investigation by the New York State Racing and Wagering Board and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office has concluded with two women being charged with pilfering charitable gaming proceeds intended to benefit the Felts Mills Fire Department.

Millicent G. Phelps, 54, and her daughter, Sheri Ann Phelps, 35, both of Felts Mills, are facing charges of third-degree grand larceny. Both are accused of stealing more than \$3,000 from the Felts Mills Fire Department while keeping the books for the fire company's Bingo and Bell Jar charitable gaming accounts. Millicent Phelps is also charged with first-degree filing of false business records.

Authorized charitable gaming is an activity that raises millions of dollars each year for bona fide non-profit organizations of veterans, volunteer firefighter and similar community groups. It is regulated by the Racing and Wagering Board, which assigned one of its investigators to audit the Felts Mills Fire Department books after discrepancies were reported to the Sheriff's Office.

"Our primary function as regulators is to ensure that these worthwhile organizations are conducting their games in compliance with state law and Board rules," said Racing and Wagering Board Chairman John D. Sabini. "It's always a very sad day when we learn that a

person in a position of trust with one of these groups is accused of improperly benefiting from the charitable games that have been authorized. This Board stands ready to do all we can to hold such individuals accountable for their actions and commends the Jefferson County Sheriff and District Attorney's Office for moving forward with the prosecution of this case."

Jefferson County Sheriff John P. Burns said the audits conducted by the Racing and Wagering Board helped pave the way for the arrests. "Our partnership with the Racing and Wagering Board on this case is a great example of how cooperation between county and state can stop people from lining their own pockets with charitable gaming funds," Sheriff Burns said.