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NEWS RELEASE
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Former Bronx Coach Arrested for Selling Fraudulent CPR and First Aid Certificates

Today, investigators from this office, working in conjunction with the Kings County District Attorney's office, arrested Harold Lechner for selling fraudulent CPR and First Aid certificates to high school coaches throughout the city. Lechner's misconduct was first exposed by the Special Commissioner in a May 1998 report entitled *Selling Safety Short: The Sale of Fraudulent CPR and First Aid Certificates to High School Coaches*. Lechner, a former teacher, football coach, and dean of patrol at Columbus High School in the Bronx, provided fraudulent certification to sixteen Board of Education (BOE) coaches working in twelve high schools located throughout Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx and to five employees at a Nassau County summer camp. Over a five year period, Lechner issued CPR and First Aid certificates to coaches at 28 additional schools and deposited 293 checks and money orders from 170 coaches into his checking account, totaling \$17,361. Lechner admitted that he sold these documents directly to coaches, through the mail, and through middlemen—many of whom were school athletic directors—and he estimated that 20-25% of these certificates were fraudulent.

Lechner's actions clearly jeopardized the safety of student athletes across the city. A subsequent investigation conducted by this office illustrates the potential consequences of his activities. In early June of this year, fifteen-year-old Matthew Bando, a student at Truman High School, collapsed after walking up seven flights of stairs and died shortly thereafter. Michael Ondich, a Truman teacher who also coached wrestling and handball, administered CPR to Bando. Ondich, however, had received fraudulent CPR and First Aid certification from Lechner since 1995. While there is no evidence to suggest that Ondich's failure to receive proper training contributed to Bando's death, this tragedy underscores the potential consequences of having coaching staff who are inappropriately trained and unable to protect the health and safety of student athletes.

Lechner is charged with multiple counts of Offering a False Instrument for Filing, Issuing a False Certificate, and Falsifying Business Records. The case will be prosecuted by the office of Charles J. Hynes, Kings County District Attorney. The prosecution will be led by Deputy Bureau Chief Assistant District Attorney Wayne McKenzie.