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PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville—Madison County State's Attorney Tom Gibbons has filed additional sexual assault charges today against a Bethalto man after an investigation uncovered additional victims during the course of the investigation.

On April 11, 2014, Jason E. Ehlers (d.o.b. 12/1/77) was charged with two counts of Predatory Criminal Sexual Assault of a Child (Class X felony) and two counts of Criminal Sexual Assault (Class 1 felony). As the investigation of Ehlers progressed, it was determined that Ehlers had abused an additional seven victims.

The original victim in the case knew the defendant prior to the abuse. Likewise, the victims in the most recent charges also knew Ehlers prior to the abuse. At the time of the charges, Ehlers was a teacher in the Triad School District and a former teacher in the Bethalto School District. Investigators with the Bethalto Police Department have determined at this time that no current or former students of Ehlers were his victims. He was originally placed on administrative leave and has subsequently resigned his position.

In connection with the new evidence, fourteen new charges were filed against Ehlers in Madison County Circuit Court today. The defendant now faces four counts of Aggravated Criminal Sexual Abuse (Class 2 felony), four counts of Criminal Sexual Assault (Class 1 felony), one count of Indecent Solicitation of a Child (Class 3 felony), one count of Sexual Exploitation of a Child (Class 4 felony) and four counts of Sexual Exploitation of a Child (Class A misdemeanor).

The investigation revealed that the abuse of the victims occurred at Ehlers' home. Due to the age of the victims and the State's Attorney's desire to maintain their privacy, additional information regarding the victims will not be released.

If convicted, maximum penalty for a Class X felony is 6-30 years in prison; 4-15 years in prison for a Class 1 felony; 3-7 years in prison for a Class 2 felony; 1-3 years in prison for a Class 4 felony and up to a year in jail for a Class A misdemeanor. Ehlers was being held at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville on a \$250,000 bond from the April 11th charges. His bond for the new sets of charges is also set at \$250,000.

"My office is committed to seeing that justice is done for every victim of such a heinous crime," said State's Attorney Gibbons. "When someone victimizes children, it must be dealt with swiftly and severely so that they will no longer be able to prey upon our kids. Recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month, we remain particularly mindful of the devastating impact of abuse on children." Gibbons thanked his prosecutors in the Children's Justice Division, the Bethalto Police Department and the Madison County Child Advocacy Center for working together in bringing charges against Ehlers.

These charges, as well as the statements made herein, are based upon probable cause. The defendant is presumed innocent unless proven guilty.

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