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PRESS RELEASE

Edwardsville—Madison County State's Attorney Thomas D. Gibbons announced murder charges today in the October death of East Alton resident Crystal M. Terpening (d.o.b. 6/4/84).

Joshua J. Tharp (d.o.b. 6/4/83) is facing murder charges after a joint investigation between the Major Case Squad of Greater St. Louis and the East Alton Police Department determined that Tharp was responsible for the death of Terpening, who had been last seen by her family on October 12, 2010.

Police were called to an East Alton shopping plaza off West St. Louis Avenue on November 4, 2010, where parts of Terpening's body were discovered by workers who had been excavating the site. Investigators determined that Terpening had been murdered and her body dismembered.

After more than six weeks, investigators worked with the State's Attorney's Office and followed up numerous leads that included interviewing a large number of individuals, gathering forensic evidence and ruling out a number of scenarios. Police eventually arrested Tharp on December 21, 2010. The investigation determined that Tharp first met Terpening on the night of October 12, 2010, where they subsequently got into an argument at his residence at 222 Virginia Street in East Alton. During the argument, Tharp struck Terpening, killing her. He later dismembered her body near his residence and left it at the site where it was eventually found in November.

State's Attorney Gibbons praised the work of all of the investigators involved in solving the crime. "The circumstances of this case made the investigation extremely difficult. Their perseverance in following up on all of the leads and evidence is to be commended. The assistance that the Major Case Squad provides our area police departments is a vital part of our ability to solve difficult crimes." Gibbons also offered his condolences to the family of Terpening, including her 1-year-old son, Hayden Crawford. "I hope our actions today provide some relief for them during this difficult time. My office will work to ensure that Crystal's killer receives his full measure of justice."

First Degree Murder carries a penalty of 20-60 years in prison. Tharp was also charged with Dismembering a Human Body, a Class X Felony, which carries a penalty of 6-30 years in prison and Concealment of a Homicidal Death, a Class 3 Felony that carries a penalty of 2-5 years in prison.

The defendant is currently in custody at the Madison County Jail in Edwardsville where he is being held without bond.

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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