



August 23, 2012

**MADIGAN SUES 'ANIMALS FOR AUSTISM' CHARITY FOR FRAUD*****Attorney General: Settlement Will Require Downstate Woman Reimburse Families Waiting for Service Dogs***

**Springfield** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today filed a lawsuit and announced a settlement with a downstate woman who cheated families across the country out of thousands of dollars in payments for service dogs to assist children with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Madigan filed her lawsuit in Sangamon County Circuit Court against Glenarm resident Lea Kaydus and her organization, Animals for Autism. The lawsuit alleges that for more than a year, Kaydus solicited donations and payments from families in Illinois and around the country to match them with specially trained dogs to serve as companions for their children. To date, Madigan said, none of the families who paid for the service has received a trained dog as promised by Kaydus.

"Animals for Autism turned out to be a heartless scam," Attorney General Madigan said. "The organization targeted parents of children with autism who hoped that adopting a service dog would help their child. But instead of receiving a trained dog to assist their child, these families lost thousands of dollars and worse, had their hopes for their child dashed."

Madigan's lawsuit states that Kaydus' Animals for Autism advertised it would specially train Alaskan Klee Kai puppies and Siberian Huskies for \$3,000 to \$8,000 and then pair the dogs with families to assist their children who have Autism Spectrum Disorder. Kaydus promised families that they initially would be introduced to their dogs in person or via teleconference calls and then would receive frequent updates until the dogs were trained and ready to be placed in families' homes.

Families in California, Ohio and Washington sent payments to Kaydus and were led to believe over the course of several months that Kaydus was training dogs to place in their homes. In some cases, families received pictures of puppies, though those images were taken years earlier and depicted dogs that weren't involved in Kaydus' supposed training program. One family received a photo of a puppy that was purportedly born in 2011, though Madigan's investigation revealed the picture was actually taken in 2007.

Madigan said Kaydus has collected at least \$5,190 from families in the scheme. The lawsuit alleges numerous violations of the Illinois Consumer Fraud Act and Solicitation for Charity Act against Kaydus and her organization. Under the settlement agreement reached with Kaydus, she must provide restitution to affected families and adhere to a court order requiring her compliance with the state's charitable and consumer fraud laws.

Assistant Attorney General Melodi Green handled this case for Madigan's Consumer Fraud Bureau.

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